MEMOIRS,

OF THE

MONTAGUE FAMILY.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

London:

PRINTED FOR EDMUND LLOYD, HARLEY-STREET.

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1817.

PREFACE.

WHY it has been established as an almost invariable rule, that those who write to instruct, or even to amuse, the public, should offer an apology for so doing, is a question not easily answered. Perhaps it is a mere device of vanity, as it permits authors to speak of themselves, and, under the mask of humility, to display their self-importance ;——declaring their reluctance to obtrude on public attention, had it not been for the importunities of friends of undoubted taste and judgment, whose arguments excited their hopes and vanquished their scruples.

This ill-disguised egotism but seldom succeeds: What has the world to do with the hopes, or fears, or feelings of an author, farther than as he possesses the means of rendering it a service? And, as the world is composed not only of the studious and the learned, but of the idle and the gay, may not those who can afford an innocent relaxation—beguile a

weary hour—or convey a useful lesson in the dress of pleasing fiction, be said to render a service to the community, which need not shrink from a comparison with more recondite performances?

To accomplish this, however, is no easy task,—not more from the variety of tastes to conciliate, than from the number of our own prejudices to subdue;—self-love whispers a different judgment of our merits from that which we profess; and we blindly follow the impulse of our wishes,—mistaking the desire, for the power to please. Thus the world is overrun with flimsy productions to which, though Fashion may sometimes lend a name, or Adulation secure a patron, or Scandal promote a perusal and ensure a sale, yet, like the painted moth, they merely buz in the momentary sun-beam of favour, and then sink into deserved oblivion, along with the meretricious smiles they courted, and the ignoble passions to which they administered.

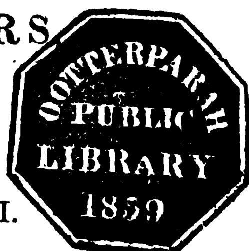
In appearing, therefore, on the public stage, every disingenuous artifice to extort applause,—to deprecate censure—or to sue for mercy,—are alike su-

perfluous and impolitic. By that impartial tribunal, unassuming genius will be fostered and supported; while the gaudy tinsel, which flings a transient brilliancy over pompous ignorance and silly dulness, will be discovered and condemned.

After the avowal of these sentiments, to enter into any detail of the motives which prompted the publication of the following sheets would be not merely useless, but presumptuous. That they are not unworthy motives may prove a source of satisfaction to the writer; but must be a matter of perfect indifference to the reader. It is, however, but just and respectful to add, that this is the first attempt of the author as a candidate for public favour; and, therefore, offered with all that trembling diffidence which is inseparable from the consciousness of unauthorized claims.

MEMOIRS

&c.



CHAPTER I.

DISTURBED at an early hour by the tumult of the inn at which she had stopped on the preceding night, Sidney Montague arose, restless and dejected, to continue her journey towards Belle Vue, the family seat of her paternal uncle, accompanied by Mrs. Rice, his housekeeper.

A cold and gloomy morning in the month of February was little calculated to enliven her depressed spirits, and, after swallowing a hasty and uncomfortable breakfast, she again set forward on her journey. Mrs. Rice, who possessed all that warm cordiality of disposition so much the distinguishing characteristic of the Irish, on observing the deep depression of her companion, endeavoured to entertain her by relating various anecdotes of

the different families whose seats they passed on the road.

Naturally cheerful, and little disposed to yield to gloom or discontent, Sidney's present dejection was not the offspring of wayward fancy or caprice, but of recent and heavy misfortune. Not more than three months had elapsed since the death of her father; which left her an orphan at the early age of twenty, and engaged in an expensive suit with her mother's family for the estate of Wood-lawn, on the result of which her whole fortune depended.

Some weeks previous to this melancholy event, Mr. Montague, her father's elder and only brother, had gone to England, with the principal part of his family; and, as one of the neighbouring gentlemen had written to apprize him of the event, Sidney had been prevailed on by an acquaintance, Mrs. Fetherstone, to remove to her house from the Glebe, which had been her late father's residence. The lady who had educated, and since lived with her, retiring to her friends, till Mr. Montague's pleasure should be known.

To this letter Mr. Montague had replied by one of thanks to the gentleman; and another to Sidney, containing the most affectionate condolements, expressing great regret that absence from the kingdom must for the present prevent his offering any personal services; and informing her that he had written to Mr. Croker, her late father's law-agent, desiring him to hold an auction at the Glebe house, and to settle all her affairs preparatory to his return, which the delicacy of his eldest daughter's health must for some time longer retard. He concluded by giving her a pressing and affectionate invitation to Bellevue, his country-house, where he said Miss Watkins, Mrs. Montague's sister, and his youngest daughter, at present resided; adding, that he had written to Miss Watkins to send his carriage and servants to escort her thither, as soon as she was apprized of her being in readiness to undertake so long a journey.

Sidney, though much gratified by the affectionate cordiality of this letter, was yet too deeply absorbed in sorrow, at the period of receiving it, to make any exertion that necessity did

not enforce, and, with as much pleasure as she could at the moment experience, consented to Mrs. Fetherstone's pressing entreaties to remain with her till she had, in some degree, recovered her spirits. With her therefore she had continued until a second letter from Mr. Montague, expressing his surprise at her prolonged stay, induced her to write to Miss Watkins, to announce her readiness to commence her journey.

The sorrow which this separation from all her early friends excited, Sidney vainly endeavoured to suppress, as her thoughts, when recalled from the past, merely wandered to the future, which fancy painted in very sombre colours. She was going to reside with a family, of whose characters and feelings towards her she was ignorant, as some years had elapsed since she had seen any of them: and though her father had kept up a constant correspondence with her uncle, that could but ill inform her of their sentiments, or how they might view her settlement among them.

High spirited from nature, and refined even to fastidious delicacy by education, Sidney's

vivid imagination painted her situation in its most gloomy colours; but gentle, grateful, and affectionate, she could not long remain insensible to Mrs. Rice's efforts to entertain and oblige her; and the attention which politeness at first induced her to pay, she at length voluntarily yielded, to escape her own disagreeable reflections.

About nine o'clock on the evening of the second day they arrived at Belle Vue, a spacious and modern mansion, surrounded by extensive woods, and commanding a fine sheet of water.

On the hall-door being opened, the youngest Miss Montague ran hastily forward to meet and embrace Sidney, with equal eagerness and animation welcoming her to Belle Vue.

The warmth of this reception was extremely soothing to Sidney's wounded feelings, and gratefully thanking Anna Montague for her kindness, she accompanied her to a drawing-room; where, netting at a small table, she perceived a lady apparently turned of fifty, tall, thin, and spare, her coun-

tenance much wrinkled, and every feature denoting fretful and irascible ill-humour.

She arose on their entrance, and, on Anna's introducing her to Sidney as her aunt Watkins, made a formal curtsey, saying, in a harsh and disagreeable voice, "I am happy, Miss Montague, to see you at Belle Vue."

Piqued and disgusted by the stiff formality of Miss Watkins's manners and address, Sidney coldly returned her salutation, yet Miss Watkins immediately commenced a conversation, by expressing her surprise at the protracted length of her absence from Belle Vue; saying, from letters she had received from Mr. Montague, she had long since expected and been prepared for her arrival.

"The state of my spirits, at the time I received my uncle's kind invitation, madam," said Sidney, sighing, "was such, that I felt myself unequal to the journey, and gladly availed myself of Mrs. Fetherstone's kind entreaty to remain with her for some time longer."

"I should have thought," cried Miss Wat-

kins, drawing herself up with a look of offended dignity, ' that mine and your cousin's society would, at such a period, have been preferable to the gaiety of Mrs. Fetherstone's numerous family, particularly at such a season as Christmas : you however thought otherwise, and are certainly the best judge."

" With Mrs. Fetherstone's family, madam, I associated only when agreeable to myself," said Sidney, equally surprised and offended, " and from every member of it I experienced the most tender and attentive kindness, nor did my uncle, in his last letter, express any displeasure at my prolonged visit."

" I beg pardon," exclaimed Miss Watkins, haughtily, " for interfering on the subject; the proper, and not the pleasant, was what I considered would have been of most importance in your eyes."

" The exact reverse I should consider of most importance in mine," said Anna, laughing, when observing Sidney hurt and offended by Miss Watkins's strictures, she affectionately pressed her hand, adding, " my papa was anxious that you should be here, as he did not

know that Mrs. Fetherstone was such an intimate friend of yours; and that I most ardently desired the pleasure of your society, I need not say," continued she, glancing her eyes towards Miss Watkins; "but, whatever anxiety I felt for your arrival, I could not wish you to leave friends with whom you were better acquainted, till your own inclination prompted you to do so."

Pleased and obliged by the cordiality of this speech, Sidney thanked Anna with much animation for her kindness; and checking the emotion Miss Watkins's strange reception and remarks had excited, continued to converse with some degree of ease and cheerfulness.

Naturally lively and volatile, and delighted by Sidney's arrival, whose society she hoped would prove a resource against Miss Watkins's habitual discontent, Anna talked with a degree of gaiety that appeared extremely disagreeable to her aunt, who, though she sometimes addressed a trifling remark to Sidney, scarcely spoke, except to reprove Anna for her levity and inattention to her wishes and advice.

To her reproofs Anna listened in silence, and seemed to consider them of no consequence, as the next moment she again broke forth in the same lively strain that had so recently given offence.

As soon as supper was over Sidney retired to her room, whither Anna accompanied her, when, feeling equally offended and embarrassed by Miss Watkins's conduct during the evening she, with some hesitation, expressed her fear that her coming to Belle Vue had displeased that lady.

"Do not entertain so silly an idea, my dear girl," said Anna, laughing: "what particularly displeases my aunt, I can scarcely tell; but I can at least safely affirm, that I know nothing which this world affords that could either please or put her in good humour; and, since papa and mama went to England, I think she has been, if possible, in worse temper than ever, and has almost vapoured me to my grave. To assign any cause, therefore, for her ill humour and ill breeding this evening, would be nearly impossible; but if she had any particular reason, it was that you did not come the precise moment

she expected you, and therefore could not resist telling you of her disapprobation: to say the truth, she has been in a horrid fit of the pouts since last week, when she had a violent quarrel with Mrs. Lyster, my governess, who left the house in a passion, The best advice I can give you respecting her. is to follow my plan of never for a moment attending to a word she utters."

"I fear," said Sidney, smiling, "I shall not be able to follow your advice quite so easily as you seem to imagine."

"If you do not, then," replied Anna, carelessly, "you will give yourself a vast deal of unnecessary trouble and vexation."

"Sidney changed the subject, by expressing a hope that her sister Fanny was better when she had last heard from England.

"Yes," replied Anna, "mama says she is recovering so fast that she hopes she will be enabled to return home by May or June."

"I shall feel most happy to see them," said Sidney, though my uncle and Charles are the only members of your family of whom I have the slightest recollection."

" You remember the best part of them, I assure you," cried Anna, laughing, " as they are fairly worth a thousand of the rest."

Sidney, much surprised, made no reply; and Anna, soon after left her to repose.

change in her feelings producing a similar change in her conduct; and her cold and studied politeness, so wrought on Miss Watkins' capricious humour, as to render her the object of her most rancorous dislike.

Some time thus elapsed with little more to mark them to Sidney than the receipt of a letter from Mr. Croker to inform her that he had disposed of every thing at the Glebe, at an approved valuation, to the gentleman who had succeeded to the living, and the money now remaining in his hands, after all attendant expenses had been paid and debts discharged, amounted to 800*l*., which she could command when or how she pleased; but added his advice to leave it in his hands, to enable him to carry on her law-suit against young Hamilton, her mother's nephew.

To this letter Sidney returned one of thanks, for the attention he had paid to the arrangement of her affairs, but declined giving any opinion respecting the disposal of the money till her uncle's return to Ireland, which was now soon expected.

For this period Sidney felt extremely impa-

tient, as she was completely wearied of Miss Watkins' uninterrupted ill humour; and finding Anna's careless levity a very inadequate resource, sighed for the relief she hoped to experience from the other branches of her uncle's family.

When she had been nearly three months at Belle Vue, as she was one morning sitting alone in the drawing-room, Anna came dancing into the room, her eyes sparkling with joy, and called out, "I have delightful news for you, Sidney—papa and mama will be home on Thursday next."

"It is indeed delightful news," cried Sidney, "and I feel doubly gratified by the prospect of so soon seeing my aunt and uncle, from the pleasure their return will give to you."

"To be candid with you," exclaimed Anna, "the only people of the party I feel very anxious to see are papa and Charles, particularly Charles, as he is a dear, generous, good fellow, the life and soul of every house he inhabits."

"Is this possible?" cried Sidney, surprised;

"why is it that you exclude my aunt and Fanny from any share of your regard?"

"Because," retorted Anna, with some bitterness, "they have wholly excluded me from theirs; and were it not for Charles, I should lead a very miserable life, as Fanny is one of the most ill-natured creatures in existence.—My uncle, as I dare say you have heard, left her a fortune of 20,000*l.* entirely in her own power, which has made her so capricious, self-willed, and tyrannical, there is no enduring her; and as she is a great favourite with mama, who allows her to do whatever she pleases, she takes the utmost pleasure in teasing me; and though papa loves me, I am sure, better than he does Fanny, yet he never interferes with mama, whom Fanny guides entirely; but as Charles is (fortunately for me) an equal darling with papa and mama, he is so good natured to me on all occasions, that I never miss the kindness of the rest, and indeed care very little about it."

Sidney, who had never before heard Anna so frankly avow her feelings, knew not what

reply to make, and simply expressed her sorrow at finding she had any reason to complain of the unkindness of her friends.

"My dear creature," cried Anna, laughing, "I have long ceased to feel any sorrow on the subject, not being quite so sensible of unkindness, and so forth, as you appear to be. I am really enchanted at the prospect of once more seeing the human face divine within these walls, as I am perfectly weary of spending my whole time looking at my aunt's crabbed countenance, and listening to her intolerable nonsense,—but nothing of all this to mama or Fanny."

Late on the evening of the day appointed by the Montagues for their return, as Sidney and Anna were strolling before the door, watching their arrival, a curricle drove rapidly up the approach: a very handsome fashionable looking young man, throwing the reins to an elder gentleman sitting beside him, sprung hastily out on seeing Sidney and Anna, and, darting forward impetuously, embraced them both, exclaiming how glad he was to see them, and to find himself again at Belle Vue.

"Not more delighted than we are to see you, my dear Charles," cried Anna; "I assure you Sidney and I have been dying with impatience for your return; only think what a time we have spent here with aunt Watkins."

"Stupid enough, indeed, I dare say," cried he, laughing; "I suppose, my poor cousin, you have been confoundedly moped and tortured."

Mr. Montague, the elder gentleman, now joining them, tenderly embraced Sidney, saying how happy he was to meet her at Belle Vue, and how much he regretted not having been at home to receive her.

Sidney had scarcely time to thank him, when, another carriage stopping at the door, Mrs. and Miss Montague joined them; and, after being severally introduced to Sidney, the whole party proceeded into the drawing-room, where Miss Watkins awaited their arrival.

Fanny Montague, though perfectly recovered from her late indisposition, complained of extreme fatigue, and requested supper might be sent up immediately, as she was very anxious to retire.

"I gave orders to have it served up the moment you should arrive, I assure you, my dear Fanny," said Miss Watkins, "as I was apprehensive you might feel fatigued; though your health, I am happy to observe from your looks, is so perfectly re-established."

Fanny, coldly thanking her, threw herself on a sofa.

Charles, who had been gazing at Sidney from their entrance into the drawing-room, as the dusk of the evening had prevented him from observing more than that she was tall and graceful on their meeting, now went up to where she was standing, and, taking her hand, exclaimed, "By George, Sidney, you have grown uncommonly since I saw you last —I cannot tell you how happy I feel to have you among us.'

Sidney thanked him, though she could not suppress a sigh at the recollection of the event which had made her a visitant at Belle Vue.

"I must positively interdict sighing," cried Charles, hastily; "I never allow any person in the house with me to indulge in low spirits."

"I hope, then," exclaimed Miss Watkins,

" that your advice may have more weight with your cousin than mine has had, as I never have been able to impress her with a due sense of the duties of fortitude and resignation."

" Most lamentable indeed," cried young Montague, in a tone of ludicrous gravity, " as I will venture to say you did not spare your lungs on the occasion."

Astonished by this irreverent reply, Sidney looked at Miss Watkins, expecting to hear her pour forth her indignation in the most unqualified terms ; but, to her utter surprise, she turned to speak to Fanny, without deigning the slightest notice of her nephew.

Charles, much diverted by Sidney's surprise, said to her with a laugh, though in a low tone, " you are astonished, I perceive, to hear me speak with so little ceremony to poor aunt Watkins, but this is the way I take to keep her in good temper: by fermenting the crusty humours, I assist them to work off, and so preserve her in something of a more agreeable temperament; you will find how much improved she will be in a few days."

" There is much room for improvement,"

thought Sidney, smiling, though she forbore any reply; and Charles, addressing his aunt, continued, " Anna tells me, ma'am, that you have been fretting so confoundedly after me, that you have been in horrid low spirits and terrible bad humour since I left home; how cruel of you not to have told me this yourself, when you know how vain it would make me!"

" Whatever else you may require," said Miss Watkins, peevishly, " you do not require much increase to your vanity, nor Anna to her carelessness and levity."

Charles laughed, but was prevented from replying by a summons to supper.

Mr. and Mrs. Montague, fatigued by their journey, were little disposed for conversation; but Charles, who was extremely delighted at his return home, got into such extravagant spirits, that despite of Fanny's incessant complaints, and Miss Watkins's half-uttered censures on his noise and turbulence, he diffused a degree of mirth and gaiety that Sidney had not before witnessed at Belle Vue.

CHAP. III.

On the family assembling next morning, Mrs. Montague apologized for Fanny's absence, who, she said, was so much fatigued, that she had ordered her breakfast in her own room.

" I would give a hundred guineas," cried Charles, " to see the nerves of a fine lady dissected."

" And pray," said Mr. Montague, laughing, " what pleasure or profit could you expect to derive from the inspection ?"

" The benefit to mankind in general, Sir," replied Charles, " of ascertaining how it happens that home and quiet, which are found so useful to all other invalids, should prove so prejudicial to them ; and how those who can drive about all day to be admired, and dance all night in a crowded assembly, cannot endure the fatigue of getting up at home."

" Charles, my love," said Mrs. Montague,

much hurt, "I did not think you could have spoken with such unkindness of your sister."

"Unkindness, ma'am, " repeated he gaily; "surely you cannot call me unkind for thinking Fanny a fine lady: she would be very sorry, I imagine, to be considered any thing else."

"If by fine ladies," said Miss Watkins, "you mean those who have a proper regard for their own consequence, and a proper attention to support the dignity of themselves and families, I should indeed hope that my niece Fanny is one, and that she may ever act in conformity to these sentiments; and this, I am happy to observe, she invariably does: *she* never degrades herself by undue levity or unmeaning mirth."

"I hope, Miss Watkins," said Charles, laughing immoderately, "that you do not think that mirth and good humour destroy a man's title to the character of a fine gentleman, as I really cannot afford to part with them at present; and yet it would mortify me confoundedly not to be thought a very fine gentleman, particularly by so good a judge."

" I have been thought a very good judge," said Miss Watkins, haughtily, " and certainly had some pretensions to consider myself so, from having been always accustomed to the very first company; and yet I cannot say I admire the manners of the fashionable young men of the present day ;—such, when I was a girl, would not have been tolerated."

" Ah, my dear ma'am," cried Charles, " it only proves how little we improve by age : it is to be sure a most lamentable consideration, but nevertheless perfectly true."

Miss Watkins, much offended, replied with great bitterness ; and Charles retorted with the most provoking raillery, till Mr. Montague, growing weary of their dispute, put an end to the conversation.

As soon as breakfast was concluded, Mr. Montague requested Sidney would accompany him to his study, and, when arrived there, thus addressed her :—" I am anxious, my dear Sidney, to learn, as far as you can tell me, the exact state in which my poor brother left his affairs ; I know from his letters that your aunt Hamilton has made every effort to overturn your

uncle Forbes's will, and to deprive you of the Woodlawn estate; but what steps she has latterly taken I have not heard, as poor Charles, for some time past, had avoided all mention of the subject, and I fear he was very apprehensive that she would establish her son's claims to the property."

"My dear father's spirits, Sir," said Sidney, "were so very low latterly, that he could not endure to speak of the business; but I understood from Mr. Croker that the payment of the rents have been stopped by order of the Court for more than a year back, and that there has been what he considers very unjust proceedings adopted by the Hamilton family."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed Mr. Montague; "but on what do they found their claims? Your grand-uncle Forbes never mentioned your uncle Hamilton's name in his will, as he had personally disobliged him, but settled Woodlawn exclusively on your mother; and as her heir at law do you now claim it."

"They have endeavoured to prove, Sir, that my uncle Forbes had no right to bequeath Woodlawn, and, if they can set aside his will as illegal,

my uncle Hamilton is next heir, and on this plea does my aunt now claim the property for Fortescue, her eldest son; but he is still a minor, and Mr. Croker does not seem to think there will be any possibility of settling the affair until he is of age."

"I never could understand before," cried Mr. Montague, "on what plea the Hamiltons disputed your right to Woodlawn: but will not your great-grandfather's will settle that point at once? He had but two children, your grandmother Hamilton and your uncle Forbes; and as the latter, Forbes, never disobliged him, and that your uncle Hamilton offended him by endeavouring to have the property settled on himself during his own life-time, I do not think it probable he could have made such a settlement, or, if he had, that your uncle Forbes would have bequeathed to your mother a property in which he had only a life-interest. Why did not Charles investigate that matter at once?"

"My father wished, if possible, Sir, to avoid the law-suit," said Sidney, "and never took any active measures until after the rents were stopped, as he considered my mother's rights

so indisputable, that it was merely involving himself in unnecessary expense; and after that period," continued she, while tears flowed down her cheeks, "he was not long spared."

Mr. Montague, sorry at seeing her thus affected, was silent for some moments, to allow time to recover herself, and then said, most affectionately, "As I understand from Mr. Croker's letters that poor Charles made no will, I will take out letters of guardianship as soon as Term commences, and every proper measure shall be taken that can tend to settle this disagreeable affair. But you say, my dear, that Mr. Croker does not think it can be finally arranged till Hamilton comes of age: do you know when that will take place?"

"Early next winter, I believe, Sir; but the month I do not exactly know."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Mr. Montague, "as I shall be about that time going to Dublin with my family, and will then make every exertion to wrest your property from those who so unjustly endeavour to withhold it; and you will, I hope, in the interim spend your time pleasantly here."

Sidney was so much affected by a conversation that so strongly recalled the remembrance of her father, and by the tenderness of her uncle's manner, that, in endeavouring to thank him, she burst into tears.

"Sidney, my dearest girl," cried Mr. Montague with some emotion, "exert more fortitude, and do not thus weakly give way to unavailing sorrow. The same affection I bore to your father I now feel for you: gratify me, therefore, by being cheerful and happy, and trust implicitly to my exertions to restore you to your just rights."

Sidney, anxious to be alone, was rising to retire, when Charles, coming into the room, advanced forward to speak to her; but, on perceiving she had been weeping, suddenly stopped, exclaiming, in an accent of astonishment and concern, "What can have thus affected you, Sidney? who or what can have given you any uneasiness?"

"We have been speaking on business," said Mr. Montague, "that has affected her spirits; but she must endeavour to acquire more fortitude, and to expect the best, as I have every

hope of soon recovering her property from the Hamiltons."

"Confound the whole family!" exclaimed Charles, passionately; "I believe them to be a very unprincipled set. I know young Hamilton is as dissipated and worthless a fellow as any of his age in Dublin; but come, Sidney," continued he more gaily, "keep up your spirits, and trust to my father:—be assured that neither he nor I will suffer them to defraud you of your fortune;—we will give them enough of law, since they are so fond of it."

He then proposed that she should accompany him to take a drive in his curricle, adding that the man who had been breaking his horses had assured him they were so perfectly trained, that she need not feel any apprehension, and that he had come on purpose to request the pleasure of her company.

This proposal Sidney endeavoured to decline; and Mr. Montague, fearful of trusting his son's young horses, did not press her compliance; but Charles, vehemently overruling all objections, soon obliged Sidney to hurry up stairs to prepare for her excursion.

On her return, she found Charles in the hall with his mother, who tried to dissuade him from going out without the man who had been employed to break his horses, expressing violent apprehensions for his safety.

Charles listened to her with perfect good humour; but no entreaties could induce him to alter his intentions; he declared his life was too precious to himself to run any chance of endangering it: and the moment he saw Sidney, catching her hand, he hurried her forward gaily, wishing his mother good morning.

Mrs. Montague, however alarmed for his safety, on finding opposition vain, yielded the point, but she followed him to the door, entreating he would be very careful, and drive quietly.

"My dear ma'am," cried Charles, flippantly, "I drive better than any man in Ireland—I am qualified to be a member of the four-in-hand clud, so pray do not affront me by questioning my abilities."

Charles set out cautiously, and they arrived at the town of C——, within about two miles of Belle Vue, without any accident.

On coming to the entrance of the principal street, in the middle of which a detachment of dragoons were drawn up, Charles, eager to display himself, curricle, and horses, to the best advantage, forgot all promises of prudence, and, losing his dexterity in the desire of exciting admiration, so vehemently animated the speed of his horses by whip and voice, that they pressed forward with a degree of velocity he vainly endeavoured to restrain.

Startled by the danger to which he had so thoughtlessly exposed Sidney, after such repeated promises, Charles used every exertion to guide his horses, since to check their speed he found impossible, and succeeded in keeping them in the middle of the street until they had reached the spot where the military were stationed, when the trumpet sounding, the horses, terrified at a sound to which they were so unaccustomed, turned suddenly round, and forced their passage down a steep narrow lane; nor could Charles's utmost strength or skill avail to restrain their ungovernable fury.

Shocked and terrified at their mutual danger,

Sidney sunk back in the curricle nearly insensible. Such was their perilous situation, when two officers appeared at the opposite end of the lane, who, on perceiving the horses take flight, galloped forward to their assistance, and arrived in time to avert the threatened danger, as both, springing to the ground, instantly caught the reins, and succeeded in holding the horses in till Montague's servant and some men came up to their assistance.

One of the officers advancing to the side of the curricle to assist Sidney to alight, Charles, on perceiving her lying back nearly insensible, lifted her in his arms, and, consigning her to his care, hastily begged he would have the goodness to carry her into one of the adjoining houses, until he could follow to her assistance. Sidney in a few moments recovering her recollection, and finding herself supported in the arms of a total stranger, exclaimed, " Oh! what has happened? where am I? what has become of Charles?"

" No accident has happened, upon my honour, madam," cried the officer eagerly: " the gentleman for whom you inquire is perfectly

safe ; and do not, I entreat, suffer from causeless alarm, after having so providentially escaped such imminent danger."

Sidney, revived by this assurance, recovered from the terror she had suffered at the idea of Charles having met with some dreadful accident, as his absence seemed to indicate ; and thanking the gentleman with politeness and energy for his assistance and attention, she expressed a wish to return to Charles.

" If you do not trust to my assurance," cried the stranger, smiling, I will with pleasure call him to convince you of his safety ; but until he can have the harness adjusted, which has suffered a good deal, permit me to advise you to remain here."

" I do not doubt your assertion, Sir," said Sidney, blushing, " and cannot express how much I feel obliged by your kindness and attention."

He assured her that he felt extremely happy at having been so fortunate as to render her any service, and then, changing to other subjects, conversed with equal fluency and energy of manner, though somewhat tinctured

with reserve. He appeared about six or eight and twenty, tall, and very finely formed; his countenance glowed with animation, and his eyes sparkled with the liveliest expression of intelligence. Sidney, equally pleased by his manners and appearance, conversed with all that soft and polished good breeding which the excellent education she had received, together with an early introduction to the best company, had so successfully cultivated; so that to all the pleasing attraction of youth and beauty, she united a degree of self-possession and graceful ease and manners not often found at a much more advanced period of life.

In about a quarter of an hour Charles entered the shop, followed by the other officer; and after eagerly congratulating Sidney on her safety, and telling her he had been detained getting his curricle set to rights, he thanked both the gentlemen for their timely assistance, declaring that to their gallantry and activity they had owed their escape:—then informing them of his name, and that his family lived two miles distant from C——, he said that his father and himself would do themselves the

honour of waiting on them next day, and would feel extreme pleasure in cultivating an acquaintance so auspiciously commenced.

The gentleman who had carried Sidney into the shop replied that his name was Sedley, that he was major of the dragoons then quartered at C——, and introducing his companion, as his intimate friend and relation, by the name of Elmore, captain of the same regiment, added, with a smile, he was extremely happy they had been so fortunate as to render any service to a family to whom they had long felt anxious to be known, from having the honour of being very intimately acquainted with some of their relations in the county of ——, particularly Mr. Orby, from whom they had letters of introduction to Mr. Montague, which their ignorance of his having returned to Belle Vue had alone prevented them from presenting.

Charles informed them his father had only returned the preceding day, and, with a warmth that could not be resisted, requested they would accompany him and his cousin to Belle Vue, as he felt anxious to have

the pleasure of introducing them to the remainder of his family.

With this request the gentlemen complied, and they all left the shop together.

Charles, whose alarm at the danger to which he had exposed Sidney and himself had soon subsided, and who was very unwilling that Mr. or Mrs. Montague should hear of the adventure, particularly after his high vaunts in the morning, said to Sidney with great eagerness, "Remember that no hint of this little *contretems* escapes you at BelleVue—I will never forgive you if you mention a syllable of it to my mother; she would tease me so confoundedly to sell my horses, and that I would not do for any consideration."

"You may depend on my silence, since you desire it," said Sidney; "but had you not better caution your servant also?"

"Oh, as to Kennedy," cried Charles, "I have no fears of his saying a syllable of any thing I would not choose to have mentioned; he knows too well what he might expect from me if he did."

The two gentlemen, taking this as a hint that he expected similar silence from them, declared they would be equally guarded.

" My reason for not wishing to have it known," said Charles, with some hesitation, " is simply this : my mother is excessively timorous, and, if she heard the slightest hint of what occurred to-day, would persuade herself that my horses are vicious and unmanageable, and torment me to sell them ; and, though I should be sorry to terrify her unnecessarily, nothing should induce me to part with them, as I think them, without exception, the finest horses in the kingdom."

" They are very fine horses undoubtedly," said Major Sedley," scarcely suppressing a smile, " but they do not appear to me to be thoroughly trained."

" Pardon me," cried Charles, eagerly, " they are thoroughly trained, and perfectly obedient to the rein ; but, unaccustomed to the military life, the sounding of the trumpet so close to their ears terrified them, and occasioned all the mischief."

" Had I been aware of the danger," said

Major Sedley, "I would not have permitted the trumpet to sound till after you had passed us; but excuse my observing that it was very rash to trust your horses in such a situation; and permit me to advise you, Miss Montague, to be cautious of again exposing yourself to danger till the spirit of such very young horses is under rather better control than I am inclined to think it at present."

"My dear Major," cried Charles, gaily, "you seem inspired by a little of my mother's foreboding caution; and, if I was not the best-tempered fellow on earth, you would have infallibly offended me, by seeming to consider me so very unequal to take care of my poor cousin, who, to do her justice, has behaved remarkably well. I hope, Sidney, Major Sedley's cautions have not terrified you from putting yourself under my protection in future."

"Oh no," said Sidney, smiling, "as I think our danger was merely accidental."

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed Charles; "you are a girl after my own heart; and I should be a thoucand times more cautious of alarming

you than I should my sister Fanny; who, I dare say, would have screamed herself into convulsions."

Neither of the gentlemen could forbear smiling at this giddy speech; and Captain Elmore, whose countenance was distinguished by an expression of penetrating archness, exclaimed, with a laugh of much meaning, "You must certainly feel much honoured, Mr. Montague, by a degree of confidence that very few ladies would have placed in you, after so recent an escape from imminent danger."

Sidney, confounded even more by the manner than the matter of this speech, coloured excessively, and remained silent, when Charles eagerly exclaimed, "Pray let us talk no more of frights and so forth; I hate to be reminded of danger after it is over; nor do I see any reason why women should be impressed with the idea that it is pretty and feminine to affect fears they do not feel. I dislike a masculine woman, but I like to see a girl with sufficient sense and spirit to discern when and where they ought to feel alarmed."

Major Sedley, who, by a quick glance of his eye, had perceived Sidney's confusion at Captain Elmore's remark, replied by expressing his approbation of the sentiments Charles had uttered, and then changed the subject.

Eager to retrieve his character as a skilful charioteer, which he thought his late adventure had a little sullied, during the drive home Charles took infinite pains to convince his companions of his dexterity, and at length succeeded in impressing them with the desired conviction, that it had been more owing to accident than mismanagement that he had incurred any chance of danger.

On their arrival at Belle Vue, after introducing Major Sedley and Captain Elmore to Mr. and Mrs. Montague, Charles, in a hasty and slight manner, mentioned the accident which had made them acquainted. The two gentlemen then presented to Mr. Montague Mr. Orby's letters of introduction, the purport of which was to request, that he would pay them every attention. Major Sedley, he said, was only son to a man of family and fortune in the county of ——; Captain

Elmore a distant relation of the major's, and younger brother to Sir Robert Elmore; both his most intimate friends, and young men for whom he had a very particular regard.

Mr. Montague, after reading the letters, politely expressed his pleasure at their coming to the country; giving them a pressing and general invitation to his house.

Extremely gratified by so flattering a reception, both gentlemen, with good breeding, thanked him for his hospitality, and consented to spend the remainder of the day at Belle Vue.

A short time before dinner was announced, Fanny made her appearance, and Sidney felt as little disposed to like her now as she had on the preceding evening.

To a trifling figure and countenance, marked by a saucy discontented air, Fanny united all the supercilious indifference of conscious independence and acknowledged claims to distinction; considering her notice as an honour, however ungraciously accorded. She violently resented any failure in the deference she thought herself so indispensably entitled.

to receive: and though her brother seldom allowed any opportunity to escape of ridiculing what he regarded as undue arrogance, it had no other effect in Fanny than the momentary displeasure it excited. The graceful elegance of Sidney's figure, the symetry of her features, and expressive sweetness of her countenance, had inspired Fanny with an instantaneous sensation of envy; and, considering her as at once a rival and an inferior, she treated her with a degree of haughty reserve almost bordering on rudeness; which so extremely offended Sidney, that she soon gave up the attempt to converse with her, to which politeness had at first prompted her.

To Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, Fanny seemed to consider more attention due, particularly to the major, to whom she was even condescendingly polite; though he appeared so little flattered by the distinction, as to seem infinitely more inclined to devote his attention to Sidney and Anna; the easy good breeding of one, and the frank gaiety of the other, seeming much more agreeable to him and to his friend, than the honour of her notice;

an observation which equally surprised and offended Fanny, who had not been accustomed to have her notice received with indifference by young men who knew she was uncontrouled mistress of 20,000*l.*, independent of the 5000*l.* she was to inherit from her father.

To refinement of manners Major Sedley joined great spirit, intelligence, and vivacity. Captain Elmore, nearly of his own age, was lively, sensible, and well bred, possessing an inexhaustible fund of good humour, that made him ever ready to promote a frolic, and bear, with perfect temper, the raillery of his companions. This trait in his disposition rendered him so peculiarly agreeable to Charles, that he felt and expressed the warmest delight in his society, and each seemed mutually pleased with the other.

CHAP. IV.

As soon as the return of the Montague family was known in the country, Belle Vue was crowded with visitors, eager to see and to congratulate Fanny on her recovered health; and a constant succession of parties took place of the total seclusion in which Sidney had passed her time since her arrival.

As the deep dejection into which she had fallen on the death of her father had gradually yielded to the soothing powers of time, and to her own endeavours to attain fortitude, her spirits were considerably enlivened by the amusements in which she participated, and the warm kindness she experienced from her uncle and from Charles, but particularly from the latter, who seemed eager to amuse her, and delighted to see her happy: recovering some portion of her natural animation, her eyes again sparkled with their wonted brilliancy,

and the roses of health and happiness again bloomed on her expressive countenance.

Anna, delighted to be relieved from the melancholy torpor in which she had latterly spent her time, and permitted to mingle in every amusement the gay house of Belle Vue afforded, as the vacant place of her governess had not yet been filled, gave way to such extravagant spirits as extremely offended Fanny, and consequently Mrs. Montague, who implicitly followed the suggestions of her eldest daughter, and therefore declared her intention of again committing Anna to the care of another.

Provoked and frightened by a resolution she knew was designed for no other purpose than to keep her out of Fanny's way, who hated the idea of any competitors in her own family, however insignificant she considered them, Anna expressed her sentiments to Charles, saying, that as she was within a few months of Sidney's age, and now had her as a companion, she thought the ceremony of governesses might be omitted, as they did not even pretend to teach her more than she had already

learned; and as to the accomplishments of music, drawing, &c., she would of course study them as usual, under the care of her masters; concluding by a hint, that, if her mama were left to follow her own judgment, she would attend to the formation of her manners, and her acquiring the necessary knowledge of fashionable life, and no longer confine her to a school-room, to pass her hours in nearly unoccupied solitude, as it was superfluous to suppose that, at her advanced period of life, her education could be much improved by such a plan.

The reasonableness of her arguments Charles felt; the narrow-minded jealousy and tyranny that could prompt the seclusion of a girl, nearly twenty, from the society of her own family, and a participation in their amusements, roused his indignation; and he so strenuously remonstrated with Mrs. Montague on the utter inutility of providing any other companion or instructor for Anna than her own family could so amply afford, that Mrs. Montague, unable to resist the voice of truth from so beloved a son, whose power over her mind not even Fanny could rival, at length consented to give

up the plan; and, as Mr. Montague would not interfere, Fanny was compelled to submit.

Anna's pleasure at her success, and her gratitude to Charles, were equally unbounded; but, warned by the past, she carefully restrained her gaiety in the presence of either her mother or Fanny, though in their absence she indulged in a thoughtless levity which gave Sidney much uneasiness, and frequently subjected her to Charles' severe though private lectures, which at length induced her to trust herself wholly to Sidney's guidance, who, long accustomed to think and act for herself, under the direction of her father, and a lady perfectly adequate to supply the place of her mother, was better calculated to conduct herself than the wild and volatile Anna, just escaped, not from the proper and necessary trammels of education, but from the useless confinement that Fanny's ill nature and jealousy had suggested as indispensable to her own views. Charles, delighted with this change in her conduct, treated both her and Sidney with redoubled attention, as he felt himself in some degree responsible for

Anna, whose liberation from restraint his own interference had procured.

The indignation Fanny felt at the attention Charles paid to Sidney and Anna, while of her he took little further notice than sometimes rallying and sometimes censuring her foibles, was violent; but, unable to make him feel the effects of her resentment, as he was not only the idol of his father and mother, but nearly uncontrolled master of the house, she turned the whole force of her wrath against them; but particularly against Sidney, who she fancied had interfered with Charles, to procure the accomplishment of Anna's wishes. Not venturing openly to insult her in the presence of her father and brother, she contented herself with privately instilling dislike and distrust towards her in her mother's mind; and though Mrs. Montague's good breeding prevented Sidney from being able exactly to define her sentiments, she so evidently perceived that her attention and kindness were the mere effect of effort, that all her affection centred in her uncle, Charles, and Anna;

nor did she make any further useless attempts to conquer Fanny's unreasonable prejudice, or Miss Watkins' unfounded dislike.

As an extensive lake, that beautifully skirted the pleasure-grounds of Belle Vue, communicated with a navigable river, that wound for many miles through the finest part of the country, Mr. Montague kept pleasure-boats for the amusement of his own family, and that of the surrounding gentry. Charles, eager to procure Sidney any entertainment she had not hitherto enjoyed, a few weeks after his return home prevailed on Mr. Montague to form a party to take a boating excursion down the river, Major Sedley promising to send the band to Belle Vue for the occasion.

The day appointed for this excursion, the company invited came early to Belle Vue, as Mrs. Montague proposed taking a cold dinner on board, and dining at a beautiful cottage, built on a sloping hill, and commanding a magnificent prospect.

The party consisted of a Mr. and Mrs. Enesy, a gentleman and lady who lived at

Mount Enesy, a few miles distant from Belle Vue.

Mr. and Mrs. Radcliffe, very old and intimate friends of the Montagues, accompanied by their son and daughter.

Mrs. Hervey, and her niece Miss Flowerdale, the heiress of a fine estate not far from Belle Vue; a pretty affected girl, as extravagantly fond of admiration as she was silly in the methods she took to obtain it.

Mr. Dawson, a mere country squire, who prided himself in keeping the best dogs and horses in the country; with his two sisters, equally plain in their manners and appearance.

Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, accompanied by two officers of the same regiment; Mr. French, a handsome, fashionable-looking young man, with much of the military toss of very young officers; Mr. Elverton, a fair effeminate young man, fully aware of the distinction he thought due to a red coat, and priding himself on his cleverness in the art of cookery

and acknowledged correct taste in wines, which he seemed to consider the chief, if not only, ingredients of a soldier.

As the party proposed walking to the boat-house, from whence they were to go on board, they were all assembled in the hall preparing to set out, when a tall masculine-looking woman drove up to the door in a curricle, followed by two grooms, and jumping out, without waiting to receive any assistance, proceeded into the house.

On seeing her enter, Charles advanced to meet her, and addressing her with great, though not very ceremonious cordiality, by the name of Dalton, expressed his pleasure at seeing her, and asked her to join their party.

"With all my heart, Montague," replied Miss Dalton, with equal familiarity; "I am just equipped for such an expedition," continued she, pointing to her Hessian boots, short habit, and man's hat; "and it is quite in the style I like—so no ceremony, no nonsensical parade of apology for not sending me a formal invitation, which, by-the-by, I could not have

accepted, as I only returned from Wicklow last night."

"I never stand on ceremony with Miss Dalton," returned Charles; "I always take her as I find her."

He then, at Miss Dalton's request, introduced her to all the military gentlemen present, whom she had never before seen, and who all eyed her with no small share of curiosity and surprise; when perceiving Sidney, she asked Charles who she was.

He replied, his cousin, and living with them; adding, "shall I introduce you to her?"

"Certainly," replied she, "and I dare say the same introduction will do now and ever, with only the trifling alteration of Mrs. for Miss: just the pretty blooming face," continued she in an audible whisper, "to do your business."

Charles laughed, but made no reply; and though Sidney coloured high at the remark, she affected not to have overheard it. The ceremony of introduction over, the whole party set out, accompanied by Miss Dalton.

This lady had long distinguished herself by an utter defiance of all the common rules and forms of the world. Of a lively and turbulent disposition, and bred up under a mother whose system of education was, that no young lady should move out of a measured pace, or speak above a whisper, and that the less of either she did the better, as men always admired quiet modest young women,—Miss Dalton had been compelled, in her childish days, to confine the sallies of a lively, and not very manageable temper, to her nursery; where she recompensed herself, for the restraint in which she was elsewhere held, by an unbounded indulgence in that species of low humour and coarse retort she there acquired. Her advancing years depriving her of this resource, she ardently and incessantly sighed for the period of final emancipation; and when the desired era arrived, by the death of her mother, she burst on her astonished companions in a character perfectly unlike any to which they had ever been accustomed, giving her opinions on all subjects without a thought of the propriety or impropriety of what she uttered;

and enjoying every amusement that offered, no matter whether they were consistent with the female character or not. The novelty of this conduct, joined to her flow of spirits, for a while secured her that species of admiration which every thing odd and surprising at first excites; and her female competitors were not a little mortified at seeing her followed, and apparently an object of attention among all the men of their acquaintance; while they were themselves comparatively overlooked. Her triumph, however, was neither flattering nor of very long duration: men laughed and wondered while the novelty lasted; but no man thought of making such a woman the mistress of his house and fortune, except those who did so from mercenary motives; and by these Miss Balton had too much penetration to be deceived. The anger and mortification she felt at being thus overlooked, she had too long accustomed herself to unbounded freedom of speech to be capable of disguising, though her sneers and sarcasms answered no other purpose than exciting an universal combination against her; and soon becoming as general an ob-

ject of dislike among men as she had ever been among her own sex, she passed a life of perpetual warfare, taking malicious pleasure in bestowing on others some portion of those feelings which tormented her own breast. Her fortune, which, owing to the death of an only and unmarried brother, was very considerable, joined to her hospitality, and, on a few occasions, her good nature, still rendered her an object of some consequence in the country, yet no pleasure was derived from her society, except by those who found entertainment in her singularities;—young Montague was one of those; and, from his constant gaiety and good humour, being a very particular favourite with herself, she was, at his request, a frequent visitor at Belle Vue.

Miss Flowerdale, whose silly love of admiration betrayed her into strange inconsistencies, forgetting she had repeatedly gone on similar excursions, exhibited a thousand pretty feats, to attract the attention of the military gentlemen, who were nearly strangers to her; and as her fortune was well known, Mr. Elverton felt no

objection to be as assiduous an attendant as she could desire.

This was not a scene long to escape Miss Dalton's observation, who drily asked Miss Flowerdale what occasioned her terrors? "If it is that you may be drowned, my dear," continued she, "should such a perverse accident happen just now, you will not, I hope, have any objection to go to the bottom in such agreeable company: if your fear is that you should be overlooked, believe me your acres will be remembered though you might chance to pass unnoticed; trust therefore to them, nor fancy Mars insensible to the charms of Ceres."

An indignant flush, accompanied by a smile, passed over the countenances of all the military gentlemen at this coarse sneer; but all remained silent except Mr. Elverton, who, thinking it necessary to espouse Miss Flowerdale's cause, after a few moments consideration, replied, with a saucy laugh, "Mars, I have always understood, shewed his taste in his admiration of Venus; but I must confess myself too little versed in Pagan mythology to be en-

abled to quote an instance of his predilection in favour of Ceres; and as she was rather, I fancy, advanced in years, at least so I understood from the fables I read when a schoolboy, I should be inclined to think he would not have considered her very worthy of his admiration, even with all her other advantages."

"Vastly clever, I protest," exclaimed Miss Dalton, smiling disdainfully; "but as the Mars's of modern days are not more scrupulous than those of antiquity were, wherever they may choose to bestow their admiration, they generally consult the useful in the choice of a wife. I do not therefore think that you have yet destroyed the force of my allegory."

"Your allegories, madam, I do not pretend to understand," cried Mr. Elverton: "it would require rather a longer acquaintance with you than I have yet the honour to boast, to be enabled to understand them thoroughly."

"The brevity of our acquaintance will not prevent your proper application of them, I will venture to assert," said Miss Dalton; "but, since you plead for mercy, I will shew it; particularly as Miss Flowerdale has been so

entranced by your wit as to forget her fears; and to appease them was my humane intention."

Mr. Elverton affected to smile, but made no reply; and as Miss Flowerdale, awed and confounded by Miss Dalton's remarks, did not venture any further display of her terrors, she took no more notice of either.

Mrs. Enesy asking Sidney to go on deck, that they might enjoy a better prospect of the surrounding country, she complied, and felt the utmost pleasure in listening to the delightful harmony of the band, who followed in a smaller boat, rowed by the watermen, who dipped their oars in time to the music; and admiring the uncommon beauty of the finely-wooded shores on either side.

They had not been long sitting on deck when they were joined by major Sedley; his family and Mrs. Enesy's were connected by marriage, and, as they had intimately known each other in very early life, he entered into conversation with her with a freedom and animation Sidney had not before seen him display, laying aside the slight tincture of reserve which

marked his manners, however elegant and polished, to total strangers; and they insensibly engaged Sidney to converse with that unrestrained candour and vivacity to which she had in her father's life-time been accustomed, but in which she had seldom indulged of late, from being continually subject to Miss Watkins' sarcastic remarks, and Fanny's equally ill-natured sneers.

In a short time Miss Dalton, young Montague, and Mr. Dawson, came on deck together. Miss Dalton, after surveying the party for some moments in silence, exclaimed, "Why renounce the worship of the golden idols in the cabin, major, for mere mortal belles, one already disposed of,—and the other in the fairest way imaginable to attain the same happy summit of human bliss? Is it not so, Montague?"

Charles laughed, but made no reply; and Sidney, though ashamed and provoked by these inuendos, yet, dreading to encounter Miss Dalton, remained silent; when Major Sedley replied, with a smile, "The worship of golden idols is the last, I should suppose, Miss

Dalton would recommend, as independence of sentiment and action should unite in the same person."

"I like this frankness better," cried Miss Dalton, "than my little fair friend's silly device of pleading he could not understand common English, because spoken by one he had not known for seven years, as if he could have supposed I have been so inattentive an observer of life and manners as not to read at a glance his wishes and his views, though yours, I must confess, are beyond me."

"For the simple reason," replied he, "that I have formed none, no penetration can assist in discovering what does not exist."

"And do you really intend to abjure the sex?" cried Miss Dalton; "will wealth and beauty alike plead in vain? Has some fair damsel, that your youthful fancy worshipped as a goddess, turned out a mere mortal, and determined you for ever to fly the fair and dangerous sex, or at least to preserve your liberty from falling a sacrifice to their charms or their arts?"

The deepest crimson dyed major Sedley's

cheeks at Miss Dalton's question; but, forcing a laugh, he replied, "Since you are so kindly inquisitive into my feelings, I shall very frankly declare to you that I have formed no other resolution on the subject than to pursue whatever course future circumstances and my own inclination may prompt; and what that may be, time alone can determine."

On observing major Sedley colour so violently, Miss Dalton and Charles laughed; and Mr. Dawson exclaimed, "I wish I had a few couple of hounds as famous for nosing a fox as you are for hunting out a secret, Miss Dalton—I say, Montague, they would be worth having."

"Perhaps they might," cried Charles; "but if they never did more than merely to cross upon a scent, without being able to follow it, or to assist you to discover where the fox lay, they would not, after all, prove very useful."

"I have some compassion, whatever you may think," said Miss Dalton; "and I will therefore spare the major's blushes, more particularly as it is so genuine a rarity to see a

man of his profession troubled with *shame-facedness.*"

Major Sedley, evidently disconcerted, remained silent, and Mrs. Enesy, pitying his embarrassment, started another subject, in which Sidney eagerly joined, anxious to relieve his feelings, and disgusted by Miss Dalton's coarse indelicacy of manner and remark.

Miss Dalton, unable to derive any farther amusement from the party, soon walked away, followed by Charles, who felt but little compunction in encouraging conduct from which he extracted any entertainment.

"May I ask who that lady is, Mrs. Enesy?" said Major Sedley, when they were gone, "as the very striking singularity of her manner has, I must confess, excited my curiosity."

"I know but little of her," said Mrs. Enesy, "as she does not visit at my house; but I understand that she has a very large fortune, and lives about five or six miles distant, where an elderly female relation has resided with her for some years; and I am told she manages her house in a style just as singular

as her manners. This is all I know of her, and all this is mere hearsay."

"She hunts d—m—d well, that I can say," cried Mr. Dawson, "and gives very good dinners, and that is all I ever wish to know about her, as I think her a confounded odd woman as ever I saw."

"I have never seen her at my uncle's till this morning" said Sidney, "nor heard her name mentioned; so that I must plead absolute ignorance on the subject, though, from her manner of addressing me, you might not have supposed us such total strangers."

"Miss Dalton never makes strange with any person," cried Mr. Dawson. "Now there is you, for example, major—I saw her introduced to you this morning, and yet she spoke to you with as much freedom as if she had known you all her life, and rubbed you down with as little ceremony."

Major Sedley smiled; but, not choosing to enter farther on the subject, made no reply; and Mr. Dawson, after paying a few vulgar and common-place compliments to Sidney, walked away.

As the large vessel could not be brought sufficiently near the land to enable the party to go on shore, they were obliged to descend into the small boat; and as Miss Dalton was one among the first set on shore, Miss Flowerdale, freed from her observations, again indulged in a display of her terrors, declaring she was afraid to trust herself there, as the sight of the water quite appalled her.

Charles for some time joined Mr. Elverton in arguments and entreaties to induce her to proceed; but at length, growing weary, and impatient to get on shore, he gravely proposed that Miss Flowerdale should remain under his protection, and that Anna would desire Mrs. Montague to send refreshments on board.

To this proposal Mr. Elverton, unacquainted with Charles's character, listened in astonished silence; and Miss Flowerdale abruptly declined it, saying it was impossible she could agree to so strange a proposal.

"Suppose we all stay then," cried Charles: "what say you, Miss Radcliffe, would this be etiquette?"

" I rather think it would not," replied she, " as we have no matron; and at all events I must join mama."

" What is to be done?" exclaimed Charles, " Miss Flowerdale is afraid to go, yet dislikes to stay: what measure shall we adopt?"

" If Miss Flowerdale will honour me by trusting to my protection," said Mr. Elverton, " I will venture to ensure her safety."

" If Miss Flowerdale would trust to any of us, sir," replied Charles, " the whole affair might have been settled long since; but, if she considers herself safer under your care than under mine, I shall, however unwillingly, resign her to your protection."

Mr. Elverton, flattered by what he considered pique in Charles, so eagerly urged his services, that Miss Flowerdale, satisfied with the attention she had excited, consented to descend the ladder under his care; Charles throwing back a look of such arch congratulation at Captain Elmore, on hearing her declare her acquiescence, as obliged him to turn away, to conceal the laughter it excited.

As Mr. Elverton descended backwards, to be more particularly attentive to Miss Flowerdale's safety, he was not aware when he came to the last step of the ladder, and therefore reaching beyond the bench on which it was placed, he lost his balance, and fell to the bottom of the boat, Miss Flowerdale only prevented from following him by being caught in the arms of one of the watermen.

On seeing Mr. Elverton fall, Charles hurried to his assistance; but perceiving he had received no other injury than having his clothes very much soiled by the filth of the boat, where the band had spilled a quantity of the liquor ordered for their refreshment, he could scarcely repress a burst of laughter when he tried to condole with Mr. Elverton on his misfortune.

Enraged and disconcerted, Mr. Elverton scarcely deigned a reply to his consolations; but endeavoured to have his clothes wiped by one of the watermen; while Charles, in a low voice, reproached Miss Flowerdale for her folly in thinking herself safer under Mr. Elverton's care than his own,

The remainder of the party hastening into the boat, Mr. Elverton retired to the extreme end in sullen silence. Mr. French, on perceiving his appearance so ludicrously changed from the elegance of his morning's toilette, laughed at him with so little ceremony, that scarcely could major Sedley and captain Elmore prevent a quarrel taking place between them.

On their reaching land, Miss Dalton, who had seen the whole transaction, addressing Mr. Elverton, said, with a laugh, "Mars, I perceive, has suffered a foul eclipse; but as Venus has escaped triumphant, that, I suppose, will prove an abundant recompense."

"I wonder, Miss Dalton," cried Miss Flowerdale, deriving courage from resentment, "that you can be so cruel as to laugh at the unfortunate accident that has occurred to Mr. Elverton; indeed it has quite shocked me, from its being entirely owing to his politeness and good nature in taking care of me."

"Never grieve at a misfortune you can so easily repair, my dear," said Miss Dalton,

contemptuously; "unless, indeed, you may have been terrified from trusting your future protection to the care of so unsteady a champion."

"I declare I do not understand you," said Miss Flowerdale, angrily walking away.

"Follow her, Elverton," exclaimed the indefatigable Miss Dalton; "a red coat, even though a soiled one, has too powerful attractions to allow you to dread a repulse; and to-morrow or next day you may again shine forth in the full blaze of new military charms, so dazzling to the eyes of foolish girls."

Mr. Elverton, enraged by his deranged appearance, and by Miss Dalton's remarks, which created a general smile at his expense, replied with a bitter sneer, "We must take leave, madam, to feel honoured by the distinctions bestowed on us by all but the old and the envious of your sex; and the opinions of such can only be considered as the mere effusions of disappointment."

"And can you flatter yourself," exclaimed Miss Dalton, "that I either envy Miss Flow-

erdale her prize, or feel disappointed at not having secured a similar one? Suffer me to assure you, my pretty sir, that 3000*l.* per annum would command the finest soldier in the service, nor oblige me to rest content with the mere empty insignia of military decoration."

Unable to devise any answer sufficiently severe to a speech so wounding to his pride, from perceiving Miss Dalton utterly insensible to his sneers at old age, and neglect so wounding to her sex in general, Mr. Elverton bit his lips in sullen silence; and Miss Dalton, seizing Montague's arm, hurried him forward, to laugh over the anger and chagrin she had made him feel.

On their arrival at the cottage the party sat down to dinner, and soon after it was over set out on their return to Belle Vue.

Miss Dalton and Charles entering into conversation on curricles and horses, engaged in a vehement dispute on the respective beauty and merit of their own: and each, unable to convince the other, agreed to refer the decision to Mr. Dawson, who pronounced judgment in

favour of Montague, declaring that, though he did not pretend to be a connoisseur in curricles, his knowledge of horses no man could dispute.

Miss Dalton, dissatisfied with this verdict, loudly expressed her discontent, saying that nothing but proof could convince her of the justice of such a decision.

"If you choose," cried Charles, "I will run my curricle and horses against yours, on any day you appoint, and let either you or your groom drive."

"Thank you, my good sir," said Miss Dalton, "but I have no passion for either breaking my own neck, or inducing you to break yours; and though I pique myself on being a good whip, and you, I dare say, have equal confidence in your own abilities, it would be rather too great a venture to run a race with such a flimsy machine as a curricle."

"Run a race with the horses, then," cried Mr. Dawson; "you will be a full match for Montague."

"Perhaps I may," replied she; "so, come to breakfast with me some morning, Montague,

and do you, Dawson, come along with him, and we can then decide on the affair."

To this proposal Charles agreed, though concluding it a mere evasion of his offer; and Miss Watkins remarked, with a look of stately gravity, that she had had the happiness, or the misfortune, whichever it might be considered, of having had her education completed before the rights of women were quite so well ascertained as they had been of late years, and before unbounded freedom of manner and liberty of action were so prevalent as at present. How far, she said, the world had profited by the change, the occurrences of every day would too clearly prove.

"I wish, most sincerely," said major Sedley in a low voice, "that we could have laid aside the stiff formality and unsocial reserve of our ancestors, without substituting licentiousness in their place."

"You are not then," cried Mrs. Enesy, "an admirer of our modern improvements; the ease and freedom of our present manners do not exactly suit your taste."

"No," replied he, "I must confess they

do not; I have not yet learned to admire the wilful perversion of taste, delicacy, and propriety."

"Such an opinion," said Mrs. Enesy, smiling, "I scarcely expected to have heard from so young a man. Should not the privileges that the present modes of thinking and acting confer on your sex better reconcile you to their adoption?"

"Since I have said so much," cried he, "I will add, that no advantages I could personally enjoy from selfish indulgencies could reconcile me to the introduction of insolent negligence, and clownish disregard to the feelings of others."

He then changed the subject to others of general entertainment; and, from the whole style of his conversation, Sidney became impressed with a high opinion of his taste, refinement, and abilities.

On their return to Belle Vue, the several parties took their leave; when Fanny, who had been deeply offended by the attention major Sedley had paid to Sidney during the day, as from her first introduction to him, she had been

most anxious to attract his admiration, gave vent to her indignation by very pointed sneers against coquetry, in which Miss Watkins, who instantly comprehended her meaning, joined.

Ignorant of her views respecting Major Sedley, Sidney was at a loss to guess to whom or to what she alluded; but, on perceiving her resentment was levelled entirely at herself, tried to discover how she had offended her; but in this she failed, as Fanny did not choose to be quite so explicit as such an explanation would have required.

On retiring for the night, Sidney accompanied Anna to her room, anxious to discover if she was better informed of Fanny's meaning, or would give her any clue to guide her own conjectures.

Anna, at first, merely laughed, hinting that she could not be quite so ignorant of Fanny's meaning as she pretended. But, on Sidney's protesting she was unable to guess the source of her displeasure, Anna said, " Since you so positively profess ignorance, I must believe you, and will, accordingly, offer my own surmises on the subject.

The handsome Major was rather more exclusive in his attention than was pleasing to Fanny, who has taken some pains, useless ones I confess, to attract his admiration."

"You surely cannot mean what you say, Anna," cried Sidney, blushing from a mixture of confusion and surprise.

"Perhaps you judge of others by yourself," said Anna, laughing; "though in this instance erroneously, as I really do mean what I say, and what your countenance tells me you believe. So now, my dear, go dream of your conquest, and let the exultation it must inspire arm you with fortitude to encounter Fanny's wrath."

This conversation gave Sidney very sincere uneasiness, as it prepared her to expect that the coldness and reserve with which Fanny had hitherto treated her might be changed into active dislike; nor did the insinuation of her conquest of the handsome Major, as Anna had styled him, serve to mitigate her fears, as the confusion he had betrayed at Miss Dalton's remarks convinced her his heart was engaged. To this she felt indifferent, but could not to

the prospect of being considered an object of jealousy and aversion by one of the leading members of a family with whom she would be compelled to reside for an indefinite period of time; and, as she had sometimes thought she perceived a wish on Fanny's part to attract Major Sedley's attention, she could not altogether distrust Anna's penetration, though the knowledge of her dislike to her sister induced a hope that she had rather too highly coloured what might be a mere accidental start of unfounded displeasure.

CHAP. V.

During several succeeding days Sidney watched Fanny with a degree of attention she had never before paid her, and became confirmed in the suspicion of her wish to attract Major Sedley's notice, which, joined to the dread of her displeasure, induced Sidney to treat the Major with a degree of reserve very unlike her usual manner.

The observation of this change seemed to hurt and surprise him, though he soon ceased to take any other noticc of it than by paying more particular attention to every other member of the family except Fanny, to whom he invariably behaved with distant and reserved politeness.

The ill-disguised triumph that Fanny felt, on observing the coolness that had taken place between Sidney and Major Sedley, was lost in mortification on perceiving how inade-

quate were her own efforts to engage his admiration: he was the only man she had ever, except from motives of vanity, felt a wish to attract; and the disappointment rankled deeply in her mind, and diffused a larger portion than ever of peevishness over her manners, though the hope of still succeeding in her projects forbade all display of it in his presence. She even restrained the expression of her dislike to Sidney, lest it might incline him to view her with still less complacency than he had hitherto evinced, as she observed he was every day growing more frank and cordial towards the good-natured, lively Anna; and she therefore concluded he had peculiar aversion to ill temper and ill breeding, a motive sufficiently strong to restrain any open display of either.

One morning Sidney arose unusually early, and, finding Anna had not yet left her room, she strolled through the grounds alone, till she came to the great gate of the entrance.

A little girl, walking on the road, carrying a boy not much younger than herself in her arms, at sight of Sidney called to her young charge

to look at the nice young lady; and her attention became so occupied in admiring Sidney's dress, that, heedless of her steps, she was proceeding in the way of some cars, driving rapidly down the opposite road, without being aware of her danger.

On perceiving her perilous situation Sidney called aloud to her, when the girl, terrified on observing the cars so near her, ran forward with such precipitation towards the gate, that she fell, and the child came with violence to the ground.

Apprehensive that he had received serious injury, Sidney hastened forward to his assistance; and, on raising him from the ground, perceived his forehead was cut by the edge of a stone against which he had fallen. The little girl, terrified on seeing her brother bleed, was incapable of replying to Sidney's inquiry of where she lived. Giving up any farther attempt to discover her abode, Sidney brought the child into the porter's lodge, when the woman of the house washed the blood from his forehead, and soon succeeded in quieting him by a large piece of bread and but-

ter. Sidney renewing her inquiries as to whom the children belonged, or where they lived, the woman replied that they were the children of a man of the name of Boden, who was a cotter to his honour, and lived a little way off in the fields.

Sidney, thanking the woman for her information and kindness, told the little girl she would accompany her; and the boy, recovering his good humour, consented to proceed towards home. On their way thither Sidney asked the little girl why she had been suffered to bring the child to such a distance, when so unable to take care of him. The girl replied that her mammy and her granny were both ill in bed, and her daddy out at work; and that, as there was no person to give her brother his breakfast, she had brought him out to divert him, as being hungry had made him very cross.

Much affected by the little girl's artless tale, Sidney felt pleased that accident had induced her to notice them, from a hope of being enabled to give some assistance where it appeared to be so much required.

On arriving at the cottage she found a very

decent well-looking young man employed in preparing breakfast; and, though his countenance was strongly marked by dejection, it became instantly animated on learning from his daughter the kindness and attention Sidney had shewn to herself and brother, and he poured forth the warmest thanks for her goodness and condescension.

Sidney, disclaiming any title to thanks, inquired with equal kindness and affability into the present situation of his family, saying how happy she would feel to render them any service.

With mingled feelings of pride and gratitude, Boden replied, that their present distress had originated in his whole family having but lately recovered from a fever, which, by obliging him to give up his work, first to attend them, and afterwards in consequence of his own illness, had exhausted his finances, and rendered him incapable of procuring the necessary medicines and nourishment for his wife and mother; the former of whom continued very weak and low after her recent confinement of another little

boy, and the latter was confined to her bed with a severe rheumatic fever.

Greatly affected by this account, and much interested by the manner of the young man, who seemed proudly reluctant to avow any species of want or distress, Sidney hesitated, ashamed to offer the few shillings she had at the time in her possession, and yet unwilling to appear as if the only motive for her inquiries had been unfeeling curiosity; when, recollecting it was growing late, she hastily wished him good morning, saying she would procure from her aunt such medicines as the present situation of his wife and mother required.

The young man, whose wishes and expectations appeared almost equally limited, warmly thanked her, and she proceeded on her way home, determined to the utmost of her power to relieve such aggravated distress, and regretting her inability to do so to the extent she wished.

On arriving at Belle Vue she met Charles at the gate, returning from his morning's ride:

dismounting, and joining her, he asked with some surprise where she had been.

She replied by giving him a concise account of the adventure in which she had just been engaged, from a wish to secure his good offices in seconding her own application to Mrs. Montague.

"My dear Sidney," cried he, laughing, "I am the worst quack in nature—had you not better apply to Rice, who is a famous doctress, and could, I dare say, prescribe for half the county at a time?"

"I do not want your prescriptions," said Sidney; "all I wish is, that you would assist me to procure from my aunt such things as this poor family require; and this, from their being cottagers to my uncle, I shall the more readily ask."

"Your best plan," cried Charles, "is, as I told you, to consult Rice; and, whatever she orders, I will beg of my mother to send them. Who are they? or why did not they apply themselves? My mother always gives wine, medicine, or any thing else to these poor people that they may require."

Sidney replied that their name was Boden, but why they had not applied she could not tell.

"Boden," repeated Charles, "I am sorry to hear it; he is a very decent, honest fellow; I will speak to him myself, and whatever assistance he wants he shall receive."

Sidney gratefully thanked him for acceding to her wishes; but he merely laughed, saying that to such attention he thought every man's servants and dependents entitled.

In pursuance of Charles' advice, Sidney applied to Mrs. Rice, who agreed, at her request, to pay a visit to Boden's cottage, and on her return told her that some wine and fresh meat for broth would be most useful to the young woman, who was very weak and low; and a few medicines, which she named, together with some new flannel, would restore the old one to her wonted health.

The latter Mrs. Rice, at Sidney's desire, undertook to procure, and to have made up, Sidney supplying her with money for that purpose; and the former Mrs. Montague, at her son's request, ordered, directing Mrs. Rice

to supply the family with whatever they required till restored to perfect health.

Anxious to be herself a judge of the amendment of the invalids, and to carry Boden's wife some clothes she had made for the new-born babe, a few evenings after, on Fanny's declining to leave the house, Sidney proposed to Anna to take a walk to see them, to which she readily assented.

On arriving at the cottage, Sidney was much pleased and surprised to find it wear an air of neatness and comfort it had not done on her preceding visit, as every article of furniture it contained was perfectly clean, and in their proper place; and she had the additional satisfaction of seeing the young woman almost recovered, sitting at the fire, nursing her infant son.

Mary Boden, rising on their entrance, thanked Sidney with great enthusiasm for all her goodness, which she said had saved her life, and then poured forth mingled thanks and blessings to Anna for her mother's and her brother's kindness, that had changed all their late misfortunes into joy and comfort.

" I am sincerely glad to hear it," said Anna, smiling at her warmth ; " but, to tell you the truth, I believe the person to whom you should feel principally obliged is my cousin."

Anna then engaging in play with the little boy, who had made various efforts to attract her attention, Sidney, much interested by the warm gratitude and pleasing countenance of Mary Boden, took a seat beside her, kindly inquiring for her mother-in-law.

Mary, won to perfect confidence by the engaging affability of Sidney's manners, and the lively interest she expressed in her affairs, replied that her mother was infinitely better, and that the spirits of her husband, which had been very low, were completely restored by the recovery of both, and all the kindness the young master had shewn them. " Oh! ma'am," continued she, " it is no wonder all the poor tenants doat on him as they do—he is their best friend, and has always something pleasant to say to them: there is not the likes of him in the whole county."

In this praise Sidney warmly concurred; expressing her pleasure at having applied to

him, since his interference had proved so useful.

"Oh! ma'am," exclaimed Mary, "he has done more for us than I am sure he has told you—may the blessing of Heaven ever attend you both!"

She then informed Sidney, that, the day she had been last at the cottage, Charles had met her husband in one of the fields, and though Boden, she said, had been loth to trouble his honour with his distress, the young master had insisted on hearing every particular; when, calling to the steward, he ordered him directly to send the family a large supply of oatmeal and potatoes, both of which articles their previous illness had prevented him from procuring, and of both which they were in the utmost need; and then telling Boden to go home and take care of his wife, and not leave the house till she was perfectly recovered, he desired the steward to enter his day's work as usual, saying he would speak to his father to permit this indulgence, and secure the steward from any blame for obeying his orders. This, she said had all been done;

which, together with the nourishing food and wine Mrs. Montague had sent her, had perfectly recovered her from the weak state to which distress of mind, and the want of every proper necessary, had reduced her; concluding her account by again most fervently imploring every blessing to attend those who had so kindly relieved her.

This little narrative, which displayed Charles in so amiable a point of view, and convinced Sidney how beneficial her own interference had proved, gave her very sincere pleasure; and, giving Mary the clothes she had brought she was rising to take leave, when Anna exclaimed, "It is raining violently, Sidney; what shall we do?"

Sidney replied by expressing a hope that the rain would soon be over.

"There is no chance of that, I fear," said Anna; "and, to tell you the truth, I am a little uneasy lest mama should discover that we have left the grounds."

"Why?" demanded Sidney; "do you think that my aunt will be displeased?"

"Mama will certainly be displeased with

me," said Anna, " for having left the pleasure-grounds without her permission;" when, seeing Sidney look extremely disconcerted by this intelligence, she added, " Do not let this terrify you so much; Charles intercedes for me whenever he is at home; he never allows me to be needlessly tormented."

Sidney, vexed at having, however innocently, induced Anna to act in any manner avowedly disagreeable to her mother, betrayed such uneasiness, that Anna, bursting into a laugh, exclaimed, " You would make a horrible bad soldier, Sidney; if I was so easily alarmed, I should long since have died of fright."

Anna's raillery had little power to sooth Sidney's apprehensions, who equally dreaded Mrs. Montague's displeasure at her daughter, and Miss Watkins's severe censure on herself, for having induced her to incur it; but, on observing Mary Boden appear greatly vexed and ashamed at their seeming so much to regret their having ventured out, she again tried to chat to her, while Anna once more engaged in play with the little boy.

They were thus engaged, when two gentlemen, entering the cottage, requested permission to stand there till the rain was over; and, on turning round, Sidney perceived Major Sedley and Captain Elmore.

On seeing them she arose, and the two gentlemen, coming forward, paid their compliments to her and Anna, saying how little they had expected the pleasure of meeting them.

"I can't say," cried Anna, laughing, "that it has been a very well-judged visit; the rain has detained us so much beyond the time we intended to stay, that mama will infallibly discover our absence; we may both, therefore, prepare for a lecture, Sidney for proposing, and I for consenting, to such an expedition."

Astonished and confounded by this giddy speech, Sidney remained silent; and Captain Elmore said, with a smile, "Your apprehensions do not appear very violent; I may therefore infer the lecture will not be very severe."

"You may, I think, with more justice infer that it will," replied Anna: "only look how petrified Sidney appears. As to me, I am

accustomed to these kind of things, and therefore don't feel them quite so much as she does; at all events, I trust to Charles for protection."

"And would not your brother," returned he, scarcely able to repress a laugh at Anna's careless volatility, "extend his good offices beyond yourself?"

"Oh! if you mean to Sidney, I dare say he would; he generally does to all who require them; but the idea of a scolding is so formidable to her, that she can derive no consolation from the certainty of his interference."

Excessively ashamed at Anna's speaking in this manner, Sidney endeavoured to restrain her, asking her how she could run on so wildly.

"And how can you," replied Anna, laughing, "look so like a naughty school-girl? What is it you can dread so much?"

Provoked by Anna's thoughtless levity, Sidney remained silent. Major Sedley, anxious to relieve her embarrassment, though evidently surprised at her uneasiness, changed the subject, by asking Anna some questions respecting her brother; and Anna immediately

inquired to what chance they owed the pleasure of seeing them?"

Captain Elmore replied, that they had left C—— after an early dinner, for the purpose of fishing in the lakes of Belle Vue, whither they were proceeding when compelled to take shelter from the rain."

Grateful to Major Sedley for putting an end to a conversation which he saw gave her pain, and forgetting the reserve that a fear of Fanny had latterly prompted her to assume towards him, Sidney conversed with a degree of animation she had never ventured since the evening on which she had been accused of coquetry; and, apparently much pleased by the change, he took even unusual pains to entertain her.

The rain continuing to fall with unabating violence, and Sidney, growing excessively uneasy at their prolonged stay, asked Anna what she thought would be their best plan.

"To wait with patience, my dear," cried she, carelessly; "I know no other remedy."

"If you will permit me," said Major Sed-

ley, " I will go on to Belle Vue, and request Mrs. Montague to send the carriage for you."

" You are very good to think of taking so much trouble," exclaimed Anna; " but I must tell you frankly it would only make bad worse; mama would be quite displeased at the fuss it would occasion."

Major Sedley pressed his offer no further; and Anna, with perfect indifference, again engaged in conversation with Captain Elmore, while Sidney vainly endeavoured to disguise her uneasiness.

Between eight and nine o'clock the rain ceased, and the whole party immediately left the house together.

As the town of C—— lay in a different direction from Belle Vue, on getting on the road, Sidney, apprehensive of the construction Fanny might put on seeing them return thus attended, wished the gentlemen good evening. Unaware of any motive she could have for desiring their absence, they begged permission to attend her home, adding, that they had proposed to call at Belle Vue on their way to the lakes.

On hearing this declaration, Sidney could make no further opposition, and, taking Anna's arm, she proceeded forward in silence, while Anna laughed and chatted with volatile gaiety.

On reaching the hall-door Anna suddenly exclaimed, "Had we not better say, Sidney, that we have been in the cottage at the river; it is more than probable no person has been there this evening; and you," continued she, addressing Captain Elmore "can say you met us returning."

"I will say whatever you please," replied he, unable to repress a smile.

"I will not say any thing except the exact truth," said Sidney; "I did not know my aunt disapproved your leaving the grounds, or I should not have proposed it; the fault is entirely mine, and I will not hesitate to say so."

"Well, well," cried Anna, "I believe you are right; Boden or some other person might betray us; so now for a penitential look: you are deep enough in the terrors already, in all conscience."

Sidney replied not, but proceeded into the

drawing-room, when Mrs. Montague asked where she had been, saying she had despatched several of the servants with umbrellas, none of whom could find her."

Sidney replied by saying where they had been, and what had detained her. While she was yet speaking, Anna, Charles, and the two gentlemen, entered; and Mrs. Montague, not choosing to express her opinion before them, turned from her in silence.

Miss Watkins, who was sitting on a sofa beside which Sidney was standing, addressing Fanny, who was seated next her, said, glancing her eyes towards Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, "I am much mistaken if Miss Montague had not a more cogent reason than mere charity for her visit to Boden's cottage this evening; such motives alone seldom prompt such very extraordinary conduct."

Fanny's cheeks glowed with indignation and jealousy, though she made no reply. Sidney, equally confounded by this remark, which she had overheard, and by the silent displeasure of Mrs. Montague's manner, sat down without speaking; while Anna, drawing

Charles to a window, told him in a low voice where they had been, entreating he would interfere in her favour, as she saw her mother was offended.

Mrs. Montague ordering tea, it was scarcely over when Mr. Montague, entering the room, informed his son that one of the servants had just told him his favourite horse was very ill, advising him to go and look at him. Major Sedley and Captain Elmore offering to accompany him, they left the room together.

When they were gone, Mrs. Montague reproved Anna with great severity for leaving the pleasure-grounds, asking her how she could venture to do so without her permission.

" She did so to oblige me, ma'am," said Sidney, much vexed at having exposed Anna to her mother's displeasure. " Had I known, that you disapproved it, I would not have asked her, and will not again act so inconsiderately.

" I hope not," exclaimed Miss Watkins; " young ladies cannot be too cautious of exposing themselves to censure; the very appearance of going in search of young men,

and particularly young men in the army, cannot be too sedulously avoided."

"Surely, ma'am," cried Sidney, equally angry and astonished, "my conduct cannot wear such an appearance—our meeting Major Sedley and Captain Elmore was wholly accidental."

"Such accidents," replied Miss Watkins, "should always be avoided, never sought; nor can I think it at all proper for young ladies to go rambling by themselves about the country—it is a liberty I never knew permitted, and one that Anna never before ventured to take."

Mr. Montague, who had listened to this dialogue in perfect silence, now came up to where Sidney was sitting, and in a voice of anger, such as she had never before heard him use, said, "Tell me instantly, Sidney, what has occurred, or what does Miss Watkins mean?"

Overpowered by her uncle's manner, and by a scene to which she was so wholly unaccustomed, Sidney with difficulty restrained her tears as she related all that had occurred,

adding, that as to what Miss Watkins could mean she must plead total ignorance.

When she had ceased speaking, Mr. Montague, addressing Miss Watkins with some sternness, said, " I should be sorry, Miss Watkins, to be obliged to say any thing disagreeable to you ; but I must request that such very improper insinuations against my niece may in future be avoided. She may have acted imprudently in leaving the grounds without desiring the attendance of a servant, but her motive for doing so does her honour." Then, turning to Sidney, added, " I am very sorry, my dear, that your good nature has exposed you to any thing unpleasant ;—do not in future leave the grounds alone ; or whenever you again wish to do so, order the carriage, and it shall instantly attend you."

With mingled energy and affection Sidney thanked her uncle for his kindness, expressing her regret for having induced Anna to act in any manner which was disapproved by her friends.

" Anna," said Mr. Montague, " should

not have gone without her mother's permission; but, since her only motive for so doing appears to have been a wish to oblige, I request my dear," continued he, addressing his lady, "you will take no farther notice of it."

Mrs. Montague assented, and he left the room.

Fanny, who was extremely discontented with the ill success of her efforts to attract Major Sedley's attention, eagerly seized this opportunity of venting her chagrin; and, disdainfully tossing her head, she exclaimed, that it would be fortunate if every person could see with her papa's eyes; but, however readily he might credit the assertion of two girls setting forth on so Quixotic an errand as that of inquiring into the health of a poor cottager, and there accidentally meeting two officers, it would not, she feared, be quite so readily believed by the world in general; and she advised Anna to be more cautious of following such an example.

"And do you, Fanny," cried Sidney, "discredit my assertions? Do you believe that I have endeavoured to impose on my uncle's

kindness, and would wilfully lead Anna into error?'

"My opinions," replied Fanny, contemptuously, "I may avow or not, as I please; but I fancy young men of fortune, more particularly in the army, are not in general such fools as to admire people merely for a display of fine feelings; and you will find yourself mistaken, I imagine, in hoping to secure their attention by such means."

"Who or what occupies the attention of gentlemen in the army," cried Sidney, glowing with indignation, "is to me a matter of perfect indifference; and if you can ascribe such motives for my actions, it would be superfluous to attempt any farther explanation of my conduct."

"It may not, however, be superfluous," replied Fanny, firing with rage, "to remind you that my situation in life entitles me to more respect."

"Though I may be again reminded," cried Miss Watkins, haughtily, "that Miss Montague is your father's niece, yet I must declare there is a something I do not well understand

in addressing such conversation to you: your rank in life, it would strike me, entitles you to rather more deference."

Overpowered by a speech so plainly insinuating that she was to consider herself as an inferior, and as such should submit in silence to any language Fanny thought proper to address to her, Sidney could no longer command her feelings, and burst into tears; when Fanny remarked, with a malicious smile, that no mode of heroics would be left unattempted to move compassion or win admiration.

This sneer recalled Sidney to recollection, and, hastily rising, she was quitting the room; when Mrs. Montague, whose good breeding, however obscured by a blind indulgence of her eldest daughter's malevolent passions, was shocked by this gross conversation, stopped her, and said, "I am sorry, Sidney, to see you so much agitated—Fanny could not intend to wound your feelings by giving you a hint which more knowledge of the world will convince you was not an unkind one; and I should be extremely concerned at your feeling offended

by any little hastiness which has passed between you."

Sidney was too much agitated to reply, and, hearing an approaching step, she hastily opened the door. Major Sedley, who was going in, on perceiving she was in tears, uttered an exclamation of surprise and concern; but she glided quickly past him, and hastening to her room, she there gave unrestrained vent to her emotions.

The fond and indulgent tenderness, the anxious solicitude to spare her from even momentary uneasiness, to which Sidney had from her earliest infancy been accustomed, had refined her feelings to even weak sensibility, and rendered her too tremblingly alive to any appearance of unkindness. From her earliest residence at Belle Vue Miss Watkins had ever treated her with severity, and sought every opportunity of addressing her with acrimony; but considering it as the mere effusion of petulant and habitual ill humour, this conduct had made no lasting impression on her mind, nor at all prepared her for meeting such sarcastic sneers, and such contemptuous treatment.

She was well aware that Fanny did not like her, and had been latterly taught to fear that she viewed her with sentiments of jealousy and aversion; yet that she would have so openly avowed those feelings, and ventured to treat her with such undisguised insult, she could not have supposed; and the shock so wholly overpowered her that she continued to weep bitterly till roused by Anna's requesting permission to enter.

This request, however unwilling to grant, Sidney could not refuse; and, drying her tears, she opened the door.

"What can you be doing here in the dark?" cried Anna: "we are going to supper, and papa sent me to request that you would come down stairs."

"I do not wish to go down," replied Sidney, "and I request you will make an apology for me to my uncle."

"Can it be possible, my dear Sidney," said Anna affectionately, pressing her hand, "that Fanny's envious ill nature can have so deeply affected you? Do not be so very foolish: if you knew her as well as I do, you would pay very

little attention to any thing she could utter; and, unless papa thinks you are ill, he will not be pleased at your refusing to come down."

"Oh Anna!" cried Sidney with great emotion, "how could you suppose me insensible to such cruel, to such I must say, insulting language, as was addressed to me this evening? I am very sensible of my uncle's kindness, and truly grateful to him, but nothing can reconcile me to submit in silence to such treatment."

Anna, naturally good-natured, and grateful to Sidney for the pains she had taken to protect her from meeting any displeasure, took infinite pains to sooth her, painting in strong language how unworthy such conduct was of giving her serious pain, and forcibly representing how little advantage could result from her taking any further notice of it. "This house," continued she, "papa neither would nor indeed could suffer you to leave; and, however displeased with Fanny for the moment, he would soon forget it, and she would then take redoubled pains to torment you. Follow my advice, and shew her you do not consider her conduct deserving a moment's notice. But ever

since the evening that she terrified you into behaving with reserve to Major Sedley, to gratify her ridiculous wish of attracting his admiration (which by-the-by, he seems very little disposed to afford her), she thinks by sneering at and tormenting you to accomplish all her plans".

Soothed by Anna's kindness, and convinced of the truth of all she had urged, Sidney thought it better to trust implicitly to her advice; and, gratefully thanking her accompanied her to the supper room.

They found the whole family seated at the table. Charles calling to Sidney, she took a seat beside him; when, perceiving she had been weeping, he asked her with great surprise, though in a lower voice, what had occurred to distress her.

Fearful that Major Sedley, next whom he was sitting, might overhear him, she replied, "Nothing of any consequence, and do not at present speak on the subject."

"Anna has been telling me," cried he, disregarding her request, "that Miss Watkins and Fanny have thought proper to speak to

you in a very strange style: surely you cannot be so silly as to attend to any thing they could say."

"They have not been very kind," said Sidney sighing; "but my dear Charles will you to oblige me, drop the subject?"

"No," cried he angrily, "there is no person attending to either of us; and I must insist on hearing what they said that could have had such an effect on your spirits."

Hurt and ashamed at his determination to pursue inquiries that she could not answer, Sidney remained silent, and Charles said with some vehemence, "I have heard enough from Anna to know they have accused you of impropriety in going to Boden's cottage this evening; it was an error which neither of them would have committed. I am sorry you did not ask me, and I would have gone with you; but they shall repent the having volunteered their services on an occasion in which they had not the slightest right to interfere."

Startled by his vehemence, Sidney intreated he would take no notice of the subject, and besought him at least to wave it for the present.

Major Sedley overhearing every word that passed, as Charles was not very cautious of the tone in which he spoke, and finding him so obstinately deaf to her entreaties, he determined that in this instance he should gratify her, by compelling him to enter into conversation with himself. Charles replied rather awkwardly to his questions, and his continued perseverance convinced Sidney that to relieve her must be the motive that induced him to take so much pains to engross her cousin's attention; an observation which equally pained and pleased her, from at once evincing his delicacy and feeling, and that he must indisputably have overheard her fruitless entreaties.

CHAP. VI.

On going into the breakfast-room next morning, Sidney found Charles alone; when recurring to the incident of the preceding evening, he vehemently insisted on hearing what Miss Watkins and Fanny had said.

Alarmed by the anger he expressed, Sidney declined answering his questions, conscious that, when she forbore making an appeal to her uncle, it would be improper to involve Charles in disputes on her account; and convinced that such a step would deservedly expose her to her aunt's severest displeasure, and add tenfold bitterness to the dislike which Miss Watkins and Fanny already felt towards her.

Provoked by her refusal to answer his inquiries, Charles was still angrily insisting on her compliance when Anna joined them, and, on his repeating the same demand to her which he had so fruitlessly addressed to Sidney, without a

moment's hesitation she related all she recollected of the conversation.

"Very well," cried Charles; "they shall both hear my opinion on the subject."

"If you wish to oblige me, Charles, said Sidney, "you will not persist in this resolution: my Aunt would be justly displeased at the idea that I had complained to you; and after all the kindness my uncle shewed on the occasion, he would feel offended with me for what he might consider a very improper attempt to irritate you against your sister. I feel most grateful for your kindness; but, if you reflect a moment, you must be convinced that your taking any notice of what passed in your absence must subject me to scenes I should be very ill fitted to encounter; and my dread of this prevented my answering your inquiries."

"Perhaps you are right," said Charles, after a few moments consideration, "and if you will only promise to resume your usual cheerfulness, and treat such conduct with the contempt it deserves, I will comply with your wishes;

though I shall not fail to take some of Fanny's own little sly methods of retaliation."

Against this resolution Sidney was prevented from remonstrating by the entrance of the remainder of the family.

An inspection of the yeomanry of the adjacent country had been appointed to take place on this day in the neighbourhood of the town of C——; and, as Mr. Montague was captain of a corps, his family determined to be present, with several others of the surrounding gentry. Major Sedley had invited the several parties to assemble at a marquée he had ordered to be pitched on the field where the inspection was to take place, to partake of some refreshments, and listen to the band he proposed to station there; and the whole family anticipated much amusement from the excursion.

The conversation during breakfast turning on this subject, Fanny, who expected to derive more entertainment from accompanying Charles in his curricle than taking her usual seat in her mother's barouche, declared her

wishes, adding, she would be ready whenever he pleased.

To her utter astonishment, Charles abruptly rejected her request, saying he had already invited Sidney to go with him; and that, even were that not the case, she was too precious a charge to be intrusted to his discretion, and that of his giddy young horses: they were not, he said, accustomed to draw a person of such importance.

Fanny, though incensed by a refusal which she had not expected, and by the words in which it was conveyed, was yet too anxious to gain her point to express her feelings; and, endeavouring to laugh at what she termed his nonsense, renewed her entreaties, saying, Sidney could accompany her mother, and would, she was certain, consent to oblige her.

"Perhaps she might," cried Charles; "she is in general very ready to oblige; but what she does can be a matter of no consequence, as I must positively decline the honour of your company."

In vain Fanny reproached, remonstrated,

and entreated: Charles, determined to mortify her, persisted in his refusal, and as Mrs. Montague, fearful of trusting Fanny with his young horses amidst a scene so likely to prove dangerous, did not urge his compliance, and as no other motive than a wish to oblige her could have induced his acquiescence, he soon left the room heartily weary of Fanny's wrath and reproaches.

As Mr. Montague had gone out previous to the commencement of this altercation, Fanny, freed from all restraint, directed the whole force of her indignation against Sidney, saying that a wish to gratify her had alone prompted her brother's refusal to oblige her; and, unchecked by any feelings of propriety or decorum, in erms of unmeasured virulence accused her of instigating Charles to insult and ill-treat her.

In vain Mrs. Montague tried to restrain her, as Sidney, shocked and overpowered by her vehemence and invectives, did not even attempt to reply, but, hastily swallowing her tea, rose and retired to her room; when indignation yielding to sorrow at being exposed to such

treatment, her fortitude again gave way, and she continued to weep till Anna came to inform her that Charles was waiting for her.

Endeavouring to restrain her tears, Sidney replied she would not go. Against this resolution Anna was beginning to remonstrate, when a summons from her mother obliged her to hasten away.

Scarcely had she quitted the room when Charles, running hastily up stairs, called aloud to Sidney, who, trying to command her feelings, went forward to meet him.

" Anna has just told me," cried he out of breath, with haste and eagerness, " that you will not come with me, because Fanny thought proper to vent her indignation on you after I left the room. Such folly I could not have expected, and such I will not allow you to practise. She treats you in this manner because she sees it makes you unhappy, and you are wisely determined to gratify her."

In vain Sidney entreated he would not ask her to accompany him, urging that she could now receive no pleasure from the excursion. Scarcely giving her time to speak, he vehe-

mently insisted on her compliance if for no other reason than to mortify Fanny, against whom he denounced severe vengeance.

Finding it vain to oppose him, and terrified by his threats against Fanny, Sidney consented to accompany him, on condition that he would take no notice of the affair to her; and this he promised, unwilling further to offend his mother.

In consequence of the delay occasioned by this incident, they did not reach the field appointed for the inspection till it was nearly over, and as the place was so much crowded that Charles could get no situation to please him, he drove round the adjoining grounds till his mother arrived, when they proceeded to the marquée, which was pitched on an eminence commanding a fine view of the surrounding country.

Here they found a large party assembled, and, being joined by the officers and gentlemen attending the inspection, sat down to partake of various refreshments; the band, who were stationed at a little distance, performing

several fine pieces of music in a very masterly style.

Mrs. Enesy, next whom Sidney was sitting, as reluctance to be near Fanny had prevented her from joining Mrs. Montague, perceiving how much she was out of spirits, treated her with even more than usual attention, mingled with such sweetness of manners that she was impressed with a lively feeling of affection and gratitude for her kindness.

Some of the party, proposing to walk, pro ceeded in front of the marquée; and Mrs. Enesy quickly advancing to take care of her little daughter, whom she had brought with her, Sidney was separated from her by the crowd. She was then going to take Anna's arm, when, perceiving Fanny leaning on her, she gave up her design, and proceeded alone to a large rock at some distance, which hung over the water, and presented a fine view of the landscape beneath.

She had not been standing here more than a moment when the band commenced playing a favourite tune of her father's, and which

she had herself played for him a few days previous to his death. The contrast of her situation now, and when under his fond and indulgent protection, so forcibly struck her, and so painfully awakened his remembrance, that, unable to repress the emotions this recollection produced, she walked hastily forward, anxious to escape all observation, and dreading to sub ject herself to the remarks, which her agitation must excite.

She had just reached a small grove, where she determined to conceal herself till she could recover her composure, when she suddenly encountered Major Sedley, who had turned from speaking to a servant.

On seeing her he advanced to address her, when observing her colour violently, and hastily wipe away her tears, he hesitated for an instant, and then said, in a tone of great softness, " Forgive this intrusion ; it was wholly unintended ; and do not think me impertinent if I venture to ask whether I shall call young Montague ? Is there any way in which I can render you the slightest service ?"

" No, no," cried Sidney, greatly con-

fused; "I do not wish to see any person; I have only been foolishly affected by hearing a tune that has recalled many painful recollections."

At that moment Charles, having missed Sidney, came forward in search of her, when, observing her agitation, he angrily exclaimed, "Since I find my arguments and advice so unavailing, Sidney, upon my soul I will apply to my father."

"I will follow your advice," cried Sidney, in extreme confusion; "I have been very silly in suffering my spirits to be affected by a too well remembered tune; but do not, I entreat, take any further notice of my folly."

Charles, without making any reply, drew her arm within his, and Major Sedley calling to the band, desired them to play the lively and popular air of "Patrick's Day in the Morning."

Mr. Dawson, who, from his first introduction to Sidney, had paid her a degree of attention he had never deemed any other woman worthy of receiving, soon joining them, very unceremoniously asked Sidney where she had

been, for that he had been vainly endeavouring to find her.

" As she knows you are fond of hunting," cried Charles, " she wished to indulge you with a chase."

" That is not the way to indulge me where Miss Montague is concerned," replied he : " I am fond of hunting a fox ; but the woman I admire, I should like to have always seated at my side."

" Your confidence in your own powers of entertainment is not trifling, I think," said Charles, laughing; " would you, Sidney, be content to grant Mr. Dawson such an indulgence ?"

" I fear not," said Sidney ; " nor have I so much vanity as to think Mr. Dawson would be much gratified if I did."

" Upon my soul you are much mistaken," replied Mr. Dawson ; " I always feel perfectly happy when I have the honour of your notice."

" Bravo! bravo, Dawson!" exclaimed Charles —" faith I think you bid fair to become a man of gallantry."

" If Miss Montague would only undertake the task of instructing him," said Major Sedley, smiling.

" I have no great confidence in my own powers," said Sidney; " and I would advise Mr. Dawson to select some other preceptress."

" I have no need of being taught what I am to admire," said Mr. Dawson, angrily; " and as to any thing else, " I suppose I have learned all I ought to know by this time,—I am rather old now to go to school."

Charles, to whom Mr. Dawson's efforts at gallantry were a never-failing subject of diversion, continued to tease him without mercy; and Sidney, growing weary of his angry remonstrances to Charles, interspersed with alternate compliments and reproaches to herself for her indifference, took the earliest opportunity of leaving them, and joining Mrs. Enesy.

In the course of their conversation Mrs. Enesy asked if she would oblige her by sometimes coming to see her of a morning. " My little" girls, continued she, " occupy so much of my time, that I am a very bad visitor;

but, as you have not such an excuse to plead, will you wave ceremony, and occasionally come and spend the morning with me?"

To this request Sidney gave a ready and cordial assent; and Mrs. Enesy, much gratified by her compliance, thanked her in very flattering terms, assuring her that she felt an anxious desire to cultivate her acquaintance from the pleasure her society afforded her.

With Mrs. Enesy Sidney remained till Charles came to inform her that Mrs. Montague was gone, when, affectionately taking leave, she accompanied him to his curricle.

As Mr. Montague, Charles, and a large party of gentlemen, were to dine that day at C——, with Major Sedley and the other officers of the dragoons quartered there, he proposed that the latter should ride with him, and that, on his leaving Sidney at Belle Vue, he would return with them.

Major Sedley, Captain Elmore, and Mr. French, assented; but the other gentlemen, pleading prior engagements, wished him a good morning, and rode off.

They had not proceeded far on their return to Belle Vue, when Charles, looking at Mr. French's horse, exclaimed, "That is a very fine horse of your's, French; have you had him long?"

"My father gave him to me last week," replied he; "and he is one of the finest creatures I ever saw."

"Does he leap well?"

"My eldest brother, who hunted him all last season, says he does remarkably well; but I have not tried him yet."

Charles, desiring him to look at a horse his servant was riding, said, "that though very young, and not yet thoroughly trained, he would venture to try him against his."

Mr. French declared he did not think him a match for his own; but Charles, convinced that he was, hastily threw the reins to Sidney, and, leaping out of the curricle, said he would prove it that moment.

"With all my heart," cried Mr. French; "let us go into one of these fields, and either Sedley or Elmore can be the judge."

Major Sedley, much surprised by Mon-

tague's giddy volatility, assisted Sidney to rein in the horses; and Charles, returning to the side of the curricle, said, " I beg pardon for my hasty exit, Sidney; I forgot you were not so well versed in the art of driving as myself, but Kennedy will take care of you till my return."

Then addressing Major Sedley, he asked him if he would come and decide whether his horse or French's leaped best. The Major declined his invitation, saying he would remain with Miss Montague till their return.

Charles then mounting the horse that Kennedy had been riding, leaped into an adjacent field, followed by Captain Elmore and Mr. French. They proceeded to a large ditch, over which they agreed to leap their horses, to decide their difference of opinion. Mr. French leaped first, and cleared the ditch. Charles instantly followed, but the opposite bank giving way, his horse fell back, throwing his rider under him into the mud and water beneath.

Terrified on seeing him fall, Sidney desired Kennedy to hasten to his master's assistance.

" No, no," cried Major Sedley; " stay where you are, and I will go myself."

He galloped forward to the spot, but, before he could reach it, Sidney was somewhat relieved by observing Captain Elmore and Mr. French drag Charles from under his horse, and assist him to rise, though the distance was too great to allow her to judge whether he had received any injury.

" I don't believe, ma'am," cried Kennedy, who had been eagerly watching them, " that my master is hurt: I don't think if he was he could walk so well."

" I earnestly hope not," said Sidney, " but I wish you would go and inquire."

" If you are not afraid to hold the horses, I will, ma'am, and be back in a moment."

Sidney replying she was not afraid, the man ran off.

On observing the servant quit Sidney, Major Sedley left Charles to the care of his companions, and galloped back to the curricle. Sidney anxiously inquired if Charles had received any injury.

"He has not I assure you," replied he; "but why did you allow the servant to leave you?"

"He was anxious to assist his master," said Sidney, "and I was very uneasy about Charles: I hope he will now return home."

"I asked him to do so; but he refused, as he asserts that French's horse broke down the ground before he leaped, and he will not give up the contest without another trial."

"I wish you had urged him to return: my aunt would be very unhappy if she knew this, and indeed I feel very uneasy."

"I did press him to return with me, I assure you; but he would not listen to me, as he was eagerly contending with French that he had not won fairly; and French, who is just as giddy as he is, was equally obstinate; and when I observed the servant leave you, I was so apprehensive of your being unable to manage these young horses, that I left them to settle the matter as they thought proper."

Sidney made no reply, but kept her eyes fixed on Charles, who, after making his servant rub down his horse that was covered with

mud, and perform the same office for himself, he again mounted, and running at the ditch, got clear over, and was instantly followed by Mr. French, when they all rode up to the curricle together.

On looking at Charles, Sidney observed that his face was greatly torn by a brier, and she asked him with much earnestness if he was otherwise hurt.

"Not I," cried he, abruptly; then, addressing Major Sedley, added, "do you think French's horse beat mine fairly?"

"I cannot say," replied he, smiling; "I was at too great a distance to judge."

"Most undoubtedly he did," cried Mr. French, angrily; "I cleared the ditch the first time when you fell in, and leaped considerably further the second time; how then can you dispute my having fairly conquered?"

"I certainly think French's horse won," said Captain Elmore."

"If French's horse had not broken down the ground," exclaimed Charles, "mine would not have fallen, and it was that alone which dispirited him.

"I will try it again," said Mr. French; "but, if you are foiled the third time, you will have nothing to plead."

"I earnestly entreat that you will give up the point, Charles," said Sidney: "you are quite wet; pray come into the curricle, and return home."

"My being wet," cried he, "does not signify, but into the curricle I cannot go: will you, Sedley, be so good as to take my place?"

Apprehensive of Charles' catching cold, Sidney urged the necessity of his immediate return to Belle Vue; but, too much mortified at his defeat to pay any attention to her entreaties, he continued to assert, with great vehemence, that he had not been fairly conquered; while Mr. French with equal warmth contended that he had. Captain Elmore could not forbear laughing at them both, though he endeavoured to moderate their eagerness; but neither would attend to him, and Sidney grew seriously alarmed on observing, that though Mr. French tried to restrain himself, he was highly offended by Charles's violence and impetuosity.

Major Sedley, who had hitherto forborne any interference, from not considering himself an adequate judge of the merits of the cause, on perceiving Sidney's uneasiness, and the mutual inclination both gentlemen manifested to quarrel, called out, " How can you, French, persist in disputing a point which it is so impossible to prove to the satisfaction of either? Since you and Montague are equally convinced of the justice of your own opinion, would it not be better to appoint some other day for deciding the contest, by again and fairly opposing the horses against each other?"

" I have no wish to dispute," cried Mr. French, angrily; " but I have taken no unfair advantage of Mr. Montague, though he asserts that I have."

" I did not say that you had taken any other advantage than the ground gave you, Sir," cried Charles, vehemently; " and—"

" If you will agree to my proposal," interrupted Major Sedley; " you can guard against a similar accident in future."

" I agree to it most readily," replied Charles, " and will venture any bet you please," con-

tinued he, addressing Mr. French, "that your horse will not beat mine on even ground."

"I am so well convinced of the contrary," said Mr. French, haughtily, "that I will leave it to you to name the sum."

"This can be all settled at another time," said Major Sedley; "and Miss Montague must be heartily weary of a subject so uninteresting to her."

Charles and Mr. French mutually agreeing to Major Sedley's proposal, and consenting to defer the final adjustment of the preliminaries till the evening, Charles asked the Major and Captain Elmore to be the umpires on the occasion.

"I must declare off," said Captain Elmore, with a laugh, "as you have not been satisfied with the justice of my verdict to-day."

"I did not question the justice of your decision," cried Charles, confounded by this remark; "I only pointed out the causes that certainly occasioned my failure."

"Perhaps you may suspect," said Mr. French, "that Sedley and Elmore might feel inclined to shew me unjust partiality. I would,

therefore, prefer your choosing Mr. Dawson, Mr. Radcliffe, or any of your own friends, to be one of the umpires."

Charles, excessively piqued, replied with great warmth, " could I entertain such a suspicion, I would not have made such a request; and Captain Elmore will, I am convinced, readily acquit me of such injustice."

" My dear Mr. Montague," exclaimed Major Sedley, " Elmore nor I could ever seriously harbour such a thought; and I will with pleasure be one of the umpires, since you wish it."

Charles thanked him, and, anxious to convince Captain Elmore how much Mr. French wronged him, he so vehemently urged him to be the other umpire, declaring that he would consider a refusal as proceeding from resentment at an offence he had not, even in thought, intended him, that Captain Elmore at length said, he would accept the office with which he was so anxious to invest him.

Charles, pleased at his compliance, eagerly declared how much he felt obliged to him; and then, riding up to the side of the curricle, said to Major Sedley, " I will hurry on

to Belle Vue, to change my dress, without letting my mother see me, as she would be a little electrified by my present appearance; and do not, I request you, Sidney, mention what has occurred, as she would torment me confoundedly if she knew any thing of the matter."

"And will not the state of your face," said Sidney, "proclaim that some accident has occurred, even independently of the time that we have been detained on the road?"

"As to the scratch on my face," cried he, "I will account for it in some other way, my mother is so timid, I hate to have her alarmed."

"Well, well," said Sidney, "I will be prudent, or at least I will be silent."

This satisfied Charles, who galloped off, followed by his servant.

The recollection of Miss Watkins' and Fanny's probable animadversions, on seeing her return unaccompanied by Charles, now forcibly struck Sidney, and, in despite of her utmost efforts to disguise her feelings, her uneasiness

became so obvious to Major Sedley, that he expressed a fear that she felt indisposed.

"I am quite well, I thank you," said Sidney, colouring at the idea of what he would think, could he know what was passing in her mind; then, after a moment's pause, added, "I fear my aunt will be surprised and alarmed at my returning without Charles; and, after his express prohibition of mentioning what has passed, I am greatly perplexed what to say."

"Will you think me very officious," cried Major Sedley, "if I venture to give you my opinion? Your own candour," added he, smiling, "has irresistibly tempted me to follow the example."

"After such a declaration," said she, half laughing; "I should have no right to feel displeasure."

"Since you allow me a privilege," cried he, with great animation, "which I could not, without your permission, venture to use, I will take advantage of it to say, that if in this instance you allow Montague to act for himself, and tell whatever tale he pleases, it will perhaps

be best; a little further delay cannot now be of any consequence, and, if you permit me to drive slowly, it will give him time to settle the matter with Mrs. Montague before your return, and thus save you from any interference that you might find disagreeable. Pardon me if I have spoken my sentiments with too much freedom, and rest assured I have not done so from any motive, that, could you read my heart, you would disapprove."

"You are very good," said Sidney, embarrassed by the earnestness of his manner; "and I feel much obliged by the kindness of your advice, which will relieve me from a situation I should find disagreeable."

As Major Sedley now drove very slowly, they did not reach Belle Vue for some time after Charles, and, on their arrival, found him standing at the hall-door, speaking to Mrs. Montague.

On seeing them appear he quitted her; and, running up to the curricle before Sidney had time to alight, jumped in, saying, "I have just been telling my mother that I scratched my face with a brier that hung across the

road, and accounted for our delay by saying I was detained by French; so you will be asked no questions, and are secure from all the pains and penalties of falsehood—and now good-by."

On going into the drawing-room, where she found the rest of the family assembled, Sidney observed Fanny standing at a window, who remarked, with a sneer, that she supposed the party whom she had just quitted were infinitely more agreeable to her than those with whom she had left the house, or she would not have staid so long alone with them.

"My staying with them," said Sidney, coldly, "depended on Charles's inclination, not on my own; and he alone is responsible for it."

"Charles," cried Fanny, with great asperity "is not quite so clever as he fancies himself, or he would not be so easily duped; but let him take care of himself; I have no great right to feel much concern about him."

"Young men at his time of life," said Miss Watkins, "are not in general very ca-

pable of taking care of themselves, but those who are should interfere to direct them."

Unable to guess at the meaning of such indistinct insinuations, Sidney was beginning to demand their purport, when Mrs. Montague, hastily stopping her, said, in a tone of forced politeness, "Pardon me, Sidney, for interrupting you; and suffer me to request that you will have the goodness to wave any farther discussion of a subject extremely disagreeable to me: I am very sorry that any trifling dispute between Fanny and her brother should have given you such uneasiness, as in this house I should wish you to receive the attention so indispensably your due."

Offended by a degree of coolness and formality with which Mrs. Montague had never before addressed her, Sidney replied by simply expressing her readiness to wave any subject disagreeable to her; and then politely, though rather coldly, thanking her for this attention to her feelings, left the room.

The more Sidney reflected, the less could she understand the tendency of Miss Watkins's and Fanny's allusions; as the wish to engage

Major Sedley's attention, of which they had before so openly accused her, could give her no clue to unravel how or in what way Charles could be duped by her, for that such was her intention they had not hesitated to imply.

Anxious to discover if Anna better understood the meaning of what equally surprised and offended her, she accompanied her to her room, on their retiring for the night, and asked her to unfold all she knew on the subject.

" You will undertake a very useless, and not a very pleasing task, I assure you," cried Anna, " in endeavouring to discover the meaning of ill-natured allusions, which they think proper to disguise: they are not in general so considerate: but since you are so anxious to know what they could mean, I will tell you what I suppose to have been their general drift; that your partiality for Major Sedley induces you to go more out with Charles, for the purpose of enjoying the society of his friend."

" I think Major Sedley a very fine young man," said Sidney; " but I feel no sort of partiality for him; and I cannot express my

wonder at Fanny's condescending to such hints. To censure, gives Miss Watkins pleasure; and therefore I am not surprised at the eagerness she manifests to attach blame which she cannot think deserved."

"Nor I either," said Anna, archly; "and feel as little wonder at Fanny's endeavouring to terrify you into acting any part she thinks most conducive to her own purposes, when she finds you fool enough (pardon the expression) to attach any importance to her conduct or her words."

"How," cried Sidney, "can I be insensible to insinuations so wounding to my feelings, and to which I have been so little accustomed?"

"And how," replied Anna, "can you lay yourself at the mercy of one so every way your inferior, or think that your treating Major Sedley with a degree of reserve almost bordering on rudeness will induce him to admire one that, with all his politeness, I evidently perceive he does not like, but takes pains, as far as he can, to avoid? And how can you provoke Charles by refusing to accede to his

wishes, merely to gratify Fanny, who so little deserves your attention?"

"I did not expect so serious a lecture from you, Anna," said Sidney, smiling.

"You must however allow that you deserved it, in suffering your pique to Fanny to induce you to desert me during the day, and leave me alone with her whom of all companions I dislike the most."

Sidney, replying that she would not again suffer her feelings to betray her into similar inattention, wished Anna good night, and retired to her room, resolved to profit by the advice she had received; and not to allow her conduct in future to be guided by the whims and caprices of one so determined as Fanny appeared to be to view her with jealousy and dislike; and so ready, on every occasion, to pour forth accusation, and throw out the most prejudiced and injurious surmises; nevertheless she resolved to be guarded, and, to the best of her judgment, to act with propriety. She could not forbear bitterly regretting the necessity she was under of continuing to reside at Belle Vue, when conscious she was an un-

welcome guest to Miss Watkins and Fanny, and, she now feared, to her aunt also. The incidents of this day determined her cautiously to restrain her too quick feelings, and guard against betraying emotion that must render her an object of curiosity, if not of criticism, As, however grateful she felt for the frank kindness Major Sedley had shewn her, his advice convinced her that he had penetrated into her feelings; and though the discovery had merely influenced him to behave with a warmth and interest pity for her situation had excited, she was sensible of the impropriety of betraying uneasiness for which she could not account without taxing her uncle's family with unkindness and injustice, and thus laying herself open to the animadversions of those who might possess very little of his delicacy or consideration.

CHAP. VII.

After strictly enjoining Sidney to silence respecting his intentions, Charles next morning set out to meet Mr. French and the other gentlemen, to decide their contest of the preceding day. Sidney, though determined not to disoblige him, and averse to any sort of interference, felt very uneasy during his absence, from the dread of a quarrel between him and Mr. French, in which both seemed equally ready to engage, as no motive had appeared to withhold Mr. French from expressing the anger he had felt on the day preceding except the restraint her presence had imposed; and, however desirous Major Sedley and Captain Elmore might be to prevent such an occurrence taking place, the vehemence and violence of both might render their interference ineffectual.

She was sitting alone in the drawing-room when Charles returned to dinner. The moment

he entered, she asked him who had been victorious.

"French was," replied he carelessly, though evidently vexed. "Sedley told me I had no chance of success, and advised me not to oppose such a young creature against a horse so thoroughly trained; and, to do French justice, he instantly offered to withdraw the bet; but, as I thought that would have been shabby, I refused his offer. He had not, however, much reason to triumph, as Sedley tried a horse of his against him, and beat him hollow, though French offered to lay any bet he was no match for his; and, had Sedley taken him up, he would have fared as badly as I did myself."

"I am very sorry," said Sidney, "that you were defeated; but, as you must now be convinced that you had no chance of success, you are not, I hope, displeased, or much disappointed."

"No, no," cried he laughing, "I am not so silly: I am very much obliged to you for keeping my counsel so well; for, though I cannot bear to make so ill a return to my mother's affection, as unnecessarily to alarm her, her groundless terrors frequently torment me. By

keeping her in ignorance of my proceedings, I at once gratify her, and myself; as I could not endure to be the inactive milksop her timidity would induce her to wish I should be."

Satisfied that he neither felt nor had expressed any resentment towards Mr. French, Sidney changed the subject.

The kindness and attention with which Mrs. Montague had hitherto treated Sidney gradually changed to cold and ceremonious politeness; and though scrupulously treated with the respect due to Mr. Montague's niece, and unable to complain of aught except Fanny's sneers and Miss Watkins' malevolent ill nature, she yet felt herself an unwelcome guest to Mrs. Montague, who evidently, though silently, espoused her eldest daughter's unfounded resentment.

Her feelings on observing this change were bitter beyond expression, and for some time she resigned herself a prey to poignant chagrin. Soothed by her uncle's unabating kindness, by Charles's increasing affection, and unremitting attention to render her happy; and terrified at the idea of occasioning dissensions,

in which Charles seemed well inclined to engage, from observing the conduct of his sister and aunt, and the effect it had on her spirits; she determined vigorously to struggle against too keen susceptibility, nor make so ill a return to her uncle's kindness and affection, as to raise discord in his family; of all things the most professedly odious to him. Pride also came to her assistance, and forcibly represented in how degrading a light she must appear if considered as a consciously unwelcome intruder in her uncle's family; she determined therefore to adopt Mrs. Montague's own mode of conduct, to veil her feelings from the world, under the mask of politeness, and strictly to observe the respect due to her, equally as her aunt, and the woman under whose protection she publicly resided.

Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, having become so domesticated at Belle Vue as frequently to spend whole days there, Sidney found it impossible wholly to disguise her feelings from their observation, and felt at once flattered and gratified by the conduct of both, as, without seeming to notice the unpleasantness of her

situation, they frequently relieved it by frank and friendly kindness of manner, and a watchful caution to obviate and blunt the edge of sneers which their presence did not entirely restrain.

In compliance with the pressing invitation Mrs. Enesy had given her, Sidney frequently drove over with Charles to Mount Enesy, and spent the morning there, while he pursued his own amusements. This intimacy rapidly increased the mutual partiality they had, from their first introduction, felt for each other, and Sidney, with grateful pleasure, often complied with Mrs. Enesy's entreaties of spending the whole day with her. Here she seldom met much company, as Mrs. Enesy, dedicating her whole attention to the education of her daughters, lived very retired: but she passed her time entirely to her satisfaction, never feeling at a loss for amusement when surrounded by Mrs. Enesy's gay and prattling children, who took infinite delight in making her the companion of their frolics; and happy in the unreserved communication of her sentiments to one so capable of appreciating her

feelings, and directing her judgment, as Mrs. Enesy. Here, also, she frequently met Major Sedley, who appeared much happier in these social family parties than in the gayer scenes of Belle Vue; Captain Elmore, who preferred the latter, was by no means so constant a visitor at Mount Enesy.

Some weeks had thus elapsed when the Montague family received an invitation to a dinner-party at Mrs. Hervey's; and thither, on the day appointed, they all proceeded, accompanied by Sidney. They found a very numerous party assembled; and, as a side-table had been laid, Miss Flowerdale invited Sidney and Anna to that, as she presided there.

Mr. Elverton, who had long professed himself an admirer of Miss Flowerdale's, and whose attentions were received with great complacency, begged permission to take the head of the table, to which she assented, and, placing herself beside him, made room for Sidney and Anna next herself.

Charles, who expected to derive more entertainment from this party than from the other,

also joined them, and was followed by Captain Elmore and Mr. French, who were curious to observe the progress Mr. Elverton was making in his advances to Miss Flowerdale's heart.

The side of the table at which Sidney was placed being much crowded, the two young men went round to the opposite one; but Charles, who, as seldom as he could, yielded his inclination to any opposing obstacles, and was anxious to get near Miss Flowerdale, begged of Sidney to make room for him beside her.

With this request Sidney would have found it impossible to comply, had not Anna, who studied his every whim, yielded up her seat, saying she would go round to the other side.

This arrangement placed Sidney next a young man she had never before seen, and who, on discovering the meaning of the bustle this move had occasioned, civilly, though aukwardly, offered his seat to Charles.

"I am much obliged to you, sir," said Charles; "but my sister is perfectly satisfied with her exchange, and I with my place."

"If your cleverness equals your effrontery, Montague," exclaimed Miss Dalton, from the other side of the table, "you stand, or rather sit, in a good place to secure a prize. Come now, let us see whether impudence in a brown coat will prove a match for gallantry and a red one."

"Whatever confidence I may feel inclined to place in my own abilities," replied Charles, "I cannot hope to rival the all-powerful influence of a red coat over the heart of a fair lady."

"Fair or brown," returned Miss Dalton, contemptuously, "their devotion to a red coat is pretty general, though, for my own part, I think it merely serves to render the folly of the wearers more conspicuous."

Captain Elmore and Mr. French felt too much contempt for Miss Dalton to experience any resentment at this speech; and, gaily bowing, they thanked her for the flattering opinion she had expressed of their profession.

"My opinion," cried the undaunted Miss

Dalton, glancing her eyes towards Mr. Elverton, "is that a coxcomb is a coxcomb, whether in a red or a brown coat. I judge of a man by his conversation and his actions, and not by the colour of his clothes; therefore what coats you had on never once occurred to me, though I cannot say I have been always so inattentive."

"I wonder, Mr. Montague," exclaimed Miss Flowerdale peevishly, "how you can laugh at what Miss Dalton says; I think she is one of the most disagreeable people I have ever known."

"She is certainly a lady, *comme-il n'y-a peu*," said Mr. Elverton; "and such as I should not think many people would feel inclined to admire."

"Not quite so many as admire Miss Flowerdale," said Charles; "but monsters of either art or nature generally excite our attention."

"Very good; very good indeed," cried Mr. Elverton; "really, Mr. Montague, you have a happy knack at repartee."

Charles now amused himself by paying extravagant compliments to Miss Flowerdale, to excite Elverton's jealousy, and induce him to pay her more than his wonted attention, in order to maintain the place he had already gained in her good opinion; in which he so happily succeeded, as to render them objects of universal ridicule; provoking a succession of sarcasms from Miss Dalton, that produced no less taunting repartees from Mr. Elverton, to the great entertainment of those who took pleasure in such scenes.

On the second course being laid on the table, a dish of wild fowl was placed before Mr. Lennon, the gentleman sitting next Sidney, and, on her asking him to help her, he broke the invariable silence he had hitherto maintained, by remarking how fond he was of shooting; adding, "Pray, ma'am, what amusement do you like best?"

"I scarcely know, sir," said Sidney, smiling at the matter and the manner of this speech; "of all active amusements I rather prefer dancing."

" Dancing is very pleasant indeed, ma'am, especially when one dances with a pretty partner: now, ma'am, with you I never should feel tired."

Charles, who had always an ear and an eye on the watch for all that could contribute to his amusement, concluding from this specimen of Mr. Lennon's conversation that he could not have found a fitter subject for his ridicule, asked Miss Flowerdale if he was not son to the man who had made an immense fortune in the lottery.

" Yes," replied she; " and as he has been in some way, I do not know how, useful to my aunt, she thought it incumbent on her to ask him here to-day, though I much wonder what brought him to this table.

" The pleasure of being near you, undoubtedly," cried Charles: " are you not aware that, like all other bright luminaries, you equally attract the admiration of the vulgar and the refined?"

" Miss Flowerdale, sir," said Mr. Elverton, with a foppish smile, " cannot fail to excite

universal admiration, though her taste is too refined to bestow it indiscriminately."

"Of that," cried Charles, bluntly, "she has given the most convincing proof, by selecting you as her favourite attendant."

"Indeed now, Mr. Montague," exclaimed Miss Flowerdale, affecting to blush, "I wonder how you can say such things as you do; but I believe you make such odd speeches merely to torment people."

Charles, leaning forward, and addressing Mr. Lennon, asked him if he might take the liberty of inquiring if there was any thing he admired so much as a handsome woman.

"No, sir, I believe not," replied Mr. Lennon, confounded by this abrupt and unexpected demand.

"I hope not, sir," cried Charles, gravely, "as I have been declaring to Miss Flowerdale my conviction of your exquisite taste, of which, I assured her, you have given the most convincing proof, by your profound admiration of herself."

"You are very good, very kind indeed,

sir," replied Mr. Lennon, colouring violently; "and I am very much obliged to Miss Flowerdale for her good opinion."

Charles, unable to forbear laughing, concealed himself behind Sidney; and Miss Flowerdale angrily requested that he would not again speak in such a manner to Mr. Lennon, as he was a person she should not at all choose to be acquainted with.

"He appears one of the *canaille*, indeed," said Mr. Elverton, saucily; "and none such could venture, I presume, to think themselves entitled to your notice."

Mrs. Hervey, rising to retire, put an end to the conversation.

Fanny, whose large fortune rendered her an object of general consequence, was surrounded in the drawing-room by a set of young men, eager to engross her attention, and recommend themselves to her notice; and though she had rejected with disdain all those who had hitherto addressed her, as infinitely beneath what she considered herself entitled to expect, she yet capriciously encouraged hopes which she had no

intention to realize, and delighted in receiving adulation she never meant to reward. Excessively piqued by the ceremonious politeness with which Major Sedley had uniformly treated her, she weakly resolved to mortify him by assuming an appearance of haughty reserve, and by bestowing her attention exclusively on those more disposed to pay her the homage she demanded. Feeling an intuitive dread of Captain Elmore, whose arch vivacity and keen penetration left her no hope of deceiving him, she directed her attention principally to Mr. French, whose vanity and levity laid him more open to such a snare; conceiving that to shew peculiar distinction to one of his brother officers would be more wounding to Major Sedley's pride than to select any man of her own particular acquaintance, from the idea that those who live in the closest habits of intimacy generally feel most jealousy of each other; and, as Mr. French experienced peculiar pleasure in outvying all his companions, she could not have chosen one more suited to her purpose.

Major Sedley, delighted to be relieved from a

situation he had found extremely irksome to his feelings, and which had damped the pleasure he had derived from the society and attention of the Montague family, took not the slightest notice of Fanny's conduct; but, leaving French to the full gratification his vanity afforded him, joined Sidney and her party.

Young Montague, sauntering round the rooms in search of amusements, observed Mr. Lennon, who had stationed himself opposite Sidney, and continued to gaze at her with an expression of silly, though unbounded, admiration; when, joining him, he said, "I believe, Mr. Lennon, you think my cousin very handsome."

Lennon, naturally aukward, and little accustomed to company, was utterly confounded by the volatility of Montague's manner, and could scarcely articulate "Indeed I do."

"If you do," returned Charles, quickly, "why do you not tell her so?"

"I should be very sorry, sir," said Lennon, now recovering more presence of mind, "to make so free."

"Make so free!" repeated Charles, laugh-

ing; "how can you hesitate, sir? Surely you don't expect that she will come and ask your opinion; and how else is she to know that you admire her?"

"I do not know, indeed, sir," said the simple Lennon; "but I do not think I ever saw any lady half so beautiful."

Excessively entertained by Lennon's replies, Charles determined to profit by his folly, which seemed likely to afford him much amusement, and gravely declared how much he felt flattered by such a compliment to his relation; and that, as it irresistibly impelled him to consider Mr. Lennon as a friend, he would introduce him as such to Miss Montague, and then give him the most favourable opportunity of pleading his own cause.

Extremely flattered by such an offer, from a young man whose notice he considered an high honour, Lennon, with great though embarrassed eagerness, declared how much he felt obliged to him. Charles, taking his reply as an assent to his proposal, was proceeding towards Sidney, when Lennon, stopping him, said, with great hesitation, "Perhaps, sir, you

will have the goodness to tell me how I should address her, for indeed I don't know how to begin."

Charles, though scarcely able to forbear laughing at his folly, replied, " Follow me, and station yourself behind Miss Montague's chair, and I will assist you to the best of my abilities."

Lennon, gratefully thanking him, followed as he desired: and Charles, going to where Sidney was sitting, said, " Permit me, Sidney, to introduce Mr. Lennon, my most intimate friend, and as such I hope you will consider him."

Sidney, though much surprised, rose and curtsied. Charles, moving behind her chair, said in a whisper, " I will never forgive you, Sidney, if you undeceive this booby;" then added aloud, " Mr. Lennon has commissioned me to tell you that he thinks you supremely handsome, and that he has been dying for an opportunity of telling you so."

" Has Mr. Lennon engaged you as his interpreter?" said Miss Radcliffe, laughing.

"He has," replied Charles, quickly; "and I beg you will not impede my operations."

"Most assuredly I will not," replied she, comprehending his meaning.

Charles whispering to Lennon, he approached behind Sidney, and, in a voice scarcely audible from confusion, said, "I hope, ma'am, you are not offended at the liberty I have taken in coming over to speak to you: I would not have done so, only Mr. Montague encouraged me."

"And what, may I venture to ask, sir," cried Major Sedley, inexpressibly surprised, "was the reception Mr. Montague taught you to expect?"

"He told me, sir," replied Lennon, "that he would be my friend; and I could expect no more from him; and I am very proud and very grateful for the great honour he has done me."

"*Taisez vous, mon cher ami,*" cried Charles, addressing the major in French, to avoid being understood by Lennon, "*et vouz m'obligerez beaucoup,*" then, addressing Lennon, added, "Pray tell me, Lennon, do you think the

celebrated Helen, or even Venus herself, was half as handsome as Miss Montague?"

"Why as to Venus, sir, you know she was no woman, but only a goddess, and therefore I can't tell any thing about her; and as to the lady you spoke of, I never saw her in my life, but I am sure she cannot be half so beautiful as Miss Montague. Now, sir, you, who have seen her, will, I am sure, say I am right."

"When I do see her," exclaimed Charles, "I will give you my opinion, and in the mean time I will trust to yours."

"And perhaps, sir, you will have the goodness to shew her to me, that I may have it to say that I saw her myself, and that I think Miss Montague the handsomest."

"How dare you, sir," said Charles, with assumed anger, "make me such a request, or think of treating my cousin so ill as first pretending to admire her, and then ask me to introduce you to another lady?"

"I meant no offence, sir; indeed I did not," cried Lennon, quite confounded at the blunder he feared he had made; "and I never will ask

to see her again, if you will be so kind as to forgive me."

"It is Miss Montague's pardon you ought to ask, and not mine," replied he; "and if you do not do it in the humblest manner, she will not forgive you, nor shall I either."

Mr. Lennon, not knowing how to proceed, stood silent, exhibiting an aspect of the most ludicrous distress; when Sidney, though ashamed at being made a party in such a scene, and unable to forbear smiling at his folly, said with great gentleness, "You have not offended me, Mr. Lennon, nor do I require any apology; but let me advise you to choose in future a less volatile counsellor than Mr. Montague."

She was then rising to go away, when Charles, detaining her, said, "Upon my soul, Sidney, I shall be very angry if you refuse to assist me in quizzing this blockhead: you know, if you provoke me, I can take ample revenge:" then, addressing Lennon, added, "Do you not intend, sir, to beg Miss Montague's pardon? You see how much you have

offended her, and that it was only to oblige me she staid here another moment."

"I don't know what to say, sir," cried the simple Lennon; "sure I did not say any thing improper; indeed I am not aware how I have offended her."

"No matter," said Charles, "whether you intended to offend her or not; when a lady is displeased, a gentleman has nothing to do but to make an apology: so come now, make your best bow, and begin."

"I should advise Mr. Lennon to go down on his knees," cried Anna, eager to second her brother's mischievous frolic; "if any gentleman had offended me, that is the least submission I should expect."

"I would certainly not be appeased unless he did so," said Miss Radcliffe, much entertained by this outré scene; "so pray, Miss Montague, turn your chair round into this snug little corner, where Mr. Lennon can conveniently kneel down, and make the prettiest speech imaginable, without being observed by any person."

"I could not do such a thing, ma'am," cried Lennon, angrily; "I never did such a thing in my life."

"I insist on your doing it this moment, sir," exclaimed Charles; "and, if you refuse it, take the consequences."

Unable longer to remain a passive spectator of this scene, and so surrounded as to be incapable, without some assistance, of making her escape from Charles, Sidney addressed Major Sedley, and entreated that he would favour her retreat.

"Most readily," cried the Major, whose countenance had exhibited a strong expression of impatience and displeasure: then taking her hand, and with his other making a passage through the crowd that pressed round the spot, added, "Had I not feared my interference might have offended, I would not have so long remained an inactive spectator of such a scene."

Charles, who had not perceived Sidney's intention of retiring till a call from Anna to prevent her induced him to look round,

caught her hand, saying, "What do you intend, Sidney? where are you going?"

"From a scene and situation," said Major Sedley, "you must pardon me for saying, I did not think *you* would have placed her in."

"Hey-day!" exclaimed Charles, in a tone of raillery and surprise; "do *you* fear meeting a rival in Lennon?"

"No," replied Major Sedley, smiling, though colouring; "but I should fear to offend Miss Montague, though you seem so little to dread it."

"Quite in the heroics, I vow," cried Charles; "but as I, my good sir, am not in the least tinctured with romance, I must beg leave to use my own management with my own cousin."

"And I," said Sidney, laughing; "must beg leave to consult my own inclination, which urges me to get away as fast as possible."

In vain Anna and Miss Radcliffe entreated her to stay, and Charles denounced the severest vengeance. She gladly availed herself of Major Sedley's assistance to effect her

escape to a distant part of the room, taking refuge near a card-table at which Mrs. Montague was sitting, whither she did not think it probable Charles would make Lennon follow her.

" Volatile as I have ever considered Montague," cried Major Sedley, with some warmth, " he has this evening surprised me by a degree of levity that I did not believe he could have practised in any instance where you were concerned."

" Charles, though inexpressibly generous and affectionate," said Sidney, " will not suffer any human being to escape his raillery and love of frolic, except my aunt and uncle; but, though so indulged a favourite with both, to them he is tenderly and uniformly respectful and attentive."

" I meant no reflection," cried the Major, " as I entertain a very sincere regard for Montague, whose frank and affectionate disposition justly entitles him to the esteem that his friends feel for him; I was only surprised that the sentiments he cherishes for you did not

prevent his exposing Mr. Lennon's silly absurdities at your expense."

Sidney, considering this speech as an oblique avowal of a belief, which he and Captain Elmore had sometimes obscurely hinted, of an attachment subsisting between her and Charles, and extremely unwilling that a supposition so remote from truth should be longer entertained, after some moments silence, said, "You will not, I hope, think I carry candour too far, when I tell you that I believe I understand the insinuation your words were intended to convey. I assure you, seriously and solemnly, that you are mistaken; and that Charles Montague feels no more for me than he openly and candidly avows. You will therefore oblige me by forbearing any farther allusions to this subject; I dislike to hear them; indeed they are utterly unfounded."

"To say how much I admire your candour," cried he, while his countenance glowed with pleasure, "might seem to imply my assent to the opinion, that women are in general deficient in a virtue which can never be too highly

prized. Never shall you hear from me a similar allusion, into which I was unwarily betrayed by entertaining a belief in which I thought myself warranted by the assertions of others: that they have been deceived, your present declaration convinces me; and I have only to request that you will forget a conversation that might incline you to think of me with resentment."

Sidney, much surprised, entreated Major Sedley to tell her who had given him such false information, which had led him to form an opinion so completely erroneous.

"The extreme anxiety you betrayed about Montague's safety," cried he, "the day I had the pleasure of first seeing you, induced both Elmore and myself to form the same opinion. Long estranged from scenes of domestic life, and little accustomed to meet with tenderness or sensibility in the tumultuous scenes of a camp or the chilling atmosphere of fashionable life, the genuine expression of your feelings struck us with surprise from their novelty, and betrayed us into an error in which we could not have very long remained had we trusted to our

own observations. To say more I do not consider myself at liberty, as I could not feel justified in repeating conversations I am well convinced were never intended to reach your ear; but if you give me permission, I will undeceive Elmore, and thus stop the progress of a report that you might not perhaps wish to have any farther circulated."

Sidney, though still more surprised, could press her inquiries no farther, and, thanking him for his attention to her wishes, changed the subject.

The party separated at an early hour, and, on their return to Belle Vue, Charles vehemently reproached Sidney for her desertion of him during the evening; and, inattentive to every representation of her extreme dislike to being made a party in such schemes, persisted in declaring that she might expect the severest retaliation if she continued to disappoint his plans of extracting amusement from one so well calculated to furnish it. Sidney, though vexed at his determination of persisting in conduct so repugnant to her feelings, and very averse to have any further intercourse with

Mr. Lennon, whose weakness and folly rendered him an object rather of compassion than ridicule, resolved, since she could not prevent Charles from acting as he pleased, that she would at least guard against giving him any opportunity of again involving her in such humiliating scenes.

Little, however, did the subject occupy her mind, when left at liberty for reflection; her recent conversation with Major Sedley wholly engrossed her thoughts. Who had so wilfully misled him she could scarcely conjecture, though the caution he had thought it necessary to use convinced her it must have been some member of her uncle's family; yet, for what purpose such an insinuation should have been given, either to him or to Captain Elmore, inexpressibly surprised her. What interest could they be supposed to take in her affairs? Miss Watkins' and Fanny's obscure, and at the same time unintelligible hints respecting Charles, at length occurred to her, and led her to suspect that from them the Major must have received his information; and she could only suppose that Fanny's desire to engross Major

Sedley's attention had induced her to give him hints that would preclude the possibility of her meeting a rival in one she so evidently dreaded; yet, why such a finesse should have been practised, where no caution seemed necessary, or how Fanny could have acted such a part, alternately surprised and disgusted her.

CHAP. VIII.

THE anger and dislike which Fanny had long felt towards Sidney was so violently increased by the attention Major Sedley had paid her on the evening of Mrs. Hervey's party, while to her own pointed preference of Mr. French's attendance he had appeared perfectly indifferent, that she could not so far command her temper as to address her with common civility. She was nearly as much displeased with Charles for his uniform kindness to his cousin, and the affection he on every occasion manifested, that she seized every opportunity of thwarting and contradicting him, and seemed to have no wish so ardent as to render his home disagreeable. In this she totally failed; for, when his first emotions of surprise had subsided, he viewed the change with indifference; and, laying aside the forbearance with which he had hitherto behaved to her, in compliment to

his mother, when in good spirits he rallied and tormented her; and, when out of temper, listened to her in silent contempt, or replied with a degree of sarcasm that soon compelled her to act on the defensive.

Fanny, thus foiled, determined to be revenged; and began privately to insinuate to Mrs. Montague her suspicions of an attachment between Sidney and Charles, which she knew her mother would greatly dislike, not only from the embarrassed state of Sidney's fortune, but from thinking such a connexion would be peculiarly disagreeable to Fanny herself: and though Mrs. Montague took no avowed notice of these insinuations, they impressed her with a degree of dislike she had not before felt to Sidney, and prevented her from actively interfering, as formerly, to restrain Miss Watkins and Fanny from proceeding to the lengths to which they were so well inclined to go.

All Sidney's good sense and good temper, and all her acquired fortitude, were now severely tried; and though they failed to preserve her from mortification and uneasiness, they yet compelled a degree of outward reserve, and

proved a restraint on both Miss Watkins and Fanny, that merely rendered them more anxious to do her ill offices.

A few mornings after the party at Mrs. Hervey's, Sidney arose very early to finish a view she was taking, which Mr. Montague was anxious to have completed; Anna declining to accompany her, saying, that poets and painters were proverbially dull company. She proceeded alone to a cottage built near the edge of the river, and where she had hitherto sat for that purpose, as it commanded a fine prospect of the view she was taking. Sitting down on a bench placed round the cottage, she remained for a considerable time deeply intent on her drawing, when her attention was roused by hearing Charles halloo out a "Good morning!" and, raising her head, she perceived him approaching, accompanied by Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, all equipped in shooting dresses.

On reaching the cottage, and observing her employment, they requested to see the picture she was drawing.

"It appears to me beautifully sketched,"

cried Charles, "and a very correct view; but if Sedley will give you his candid opinion, he is a much better judge than I am, as he draws remarkably well, and is quite a connoisseur in the art."

"If he will take so much trouble," said Sidney, "he will infinitely oblige me; then, addressing Major Sedley, added, "If you are not hurried, may I request you will point out any errors you may observe in this piece, as my uncle is anxious I should finish it correctly; and though, from having so long studied the view, I cannot exactly say where the faults lie, I am by no means satisfied with it."

"Do not," cried he, "place too implicit a reliance on Montague's assertions, as we must all allow his love of the marvellous; but, if I can give you any assistance, it will give me very peculiar pleasure, as I can feel no fear of offending you by giving you my candid opinion."

"Since you will not compliment her taste," cried Charles, "you are determined you will her sincerity, which has at least novelty to recommend it; as I do not believe there are

many young ladies who shew their performances for the purpose of having them criticised."

Major Sedley looking at the drawing, and at the view before him, told Sidney the principal fault he perceived was want of greater strength in the foreground, to throw the distant mountains sufficiently back; which, together with some other touches that he pointed out, would, he said, in his opinion, render it a strictly correct view.

Sidney, taking up a pencil, proceeded to follow the directions he gave her; while Charles and the Captain went on to a rabbit-burrow behind the cottage.

Unable to finish the picture to please herself, Sidney soon laid down the pencil, saying her patience was completely exhausted.

"If you allow me," cried Major Sedley, "I will give it a few touches for you: you have laboured at it so long, that you are incapable of discriminating exactly from the confusion of shapes and ideas floating before you."

Sidney gladly resigned him her seat, and stood looking over him, while he pro-

eeeded to finish the drawing with a taste and judgment which gave her much pleasure, from knowing her uncle's anxiety to have it executed in a masterly manner.

They were thus engaged when Sidney, raising her eyes, perceived Miss Watkins coming down one of the walks. Prepared by her late conduct for her taking advantage of seeing her alone with Major Sedley to pour forth a fresh succession of sneers against her, which she would be unable to parry without an application to Charles, and which she now more than ever disliked, from the displeasure Mrs. Montague had expressed at his readiness to quarrel with Fanny and his aunt, she felt a degree of uneasiness that became instantly impressed on her intelligent countenance.

Major Sedley, who was sitting with his back towards the walk down which Miss Watkins was coming, was much surprised, on looking up to ask Sidney some question, to perceive her evident perturbation; and, forgetting what he had intended to say, continued silent till, on seeing Miss Watkins approach the table at

which he was seated, he arose, and paid her the compliments of the morning.

Miss Watkins, convinced from Sidney's embarrassment that she had at length detected her in an impropriety, concluded she might give unbridled vent to the dislike and malevolence which she had hitherto been compelled to restrain; and, scarcely deigning a reply to Major Sedley, said, with a smile of mingled ill nature and contempt, "I seem to have surprised you, Miss Montague; you did not probably suppose that, at such a distance from the house, you were likely to meet any interruption. Such conduct I did not expect from a niece of Mr. Montague's: but, as you are such, I feel myself bound in justice to him to inform him of it; you will, therefore, be prepared to answer his inquiries, and say on what charitable errand you left the house this morning."

Overpowered with astonishment at Miss Watkins' reception of himself and address to Sidney, Major Sedley sat down without speaking; and Sidney, in a voice scarcely audible from confusion, at an attack that in his pre-

sence she had so little expected, replied, " I do not understand what you mean, madam; or what inquiries my uncle can make which I can hesitate to answer."

" Of your cleverness in deceiving your friends, and assuming whatever character suits your own purposes," said Miss Watkins, " I can entertain no doubt; though I shall feel some curiosity, I confess, to know how you will account to your uncle for receiving clandestine visits from a gentleman."

Wholly overwhelmed, Sidney remained silent; and Major Sedley, rising from his seat with a face glowing with indignation, exclaimed, " Whatever respect, madam, I feel due to every member of Mr. Montague's family, I cannot tamely suffer the imputation of conduct I should disdain to practise; and must therefore request you will explain the meaning of allusions I feel myself at a loss to comprehend."

" Whatever ignorance you may choose to affect, young man," cried Miss Watkins, with a look of disdain, " you should better recollect the respect due to me than to venture so unce-

remoniously to interrogate me: my meaning you can be at no loss to comprehend, nor shall I condescend to any farther explanation."

"As you please, madam," replied he, haughtily; "I have no desire to obtrude myself on your attention."

Miss Watkins, without deigning any reply, addressed Sidney, saying, "As you, madam, are not quite so independent as Major Sedley, I should recommend it to you to accompany me to the house, and no longer persist in conduct his present behaviour must convince you will meet its due reward, as few gentlemen who have honourable intentions have recourse to clandestine practices."

"Good Heavens, Miss Watkins!" exclaimed Sidney, "how can you use such language? What is it you mean to infer?"

"Very well," interrupted Miss Watkins: "I have nothing more to say: since my interference merely subjects me to insult, I have done."

Then, darting round a look of angry disdain, she quitted the place.

Oppressed with shame and mortification at the accusation of endeavouring to engage

Major Sedley's attention, with which Miss Watkins had so directly charged her, and which Fanny's late conduct might perhaps tend to corroborate, Sidney's fortitude wholly failed her; and, throwing herself on a seat, she covered her face with her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

On seeing her thus affected, Major Sedley approached, and, taking her hand, said, tenderly, "Do not, dear Miss Montague, suffer such gross, such unworthy conduct, thus cruelly to affect you."

"Oh! Major Sedley," cried Sidney, endeavouring to restrain her tears, "what must be my feelings at hearing such language addressed to me by a woman of Miss Watkins' years; an inmate too of the very house I inhabit? Surely no human being could believe it undeserved."

"And who," cried he, warmly, "can one moment credit her assertions? Can you suppose Mr. Montague will, whose son is so indisputably convinced of their falsehood?"

"I know not," said Sidney, in great agitation; "but oh! could my dear father have forc-

seen the cruel insults to which I am exposed, how bitter would have been his feelings!"

Major Sedley, though extremely agitated, endeavoured to sooth her. Recalled to recollection by observing his emotion, Sidney made a violent effort to restrain her feelings, and, forcing a faint smile, thanked him for his attention, adding how much she regretted that a wish to oblige her had exposed him to such improper treatment.

"Miss Watkins' conduct, with respect to myself," cried he, "could never excite more than the momentary resentment any man must feel at such an accusation; and the only impression it has made on my mind is wonder how any person, but more particularly a gentlewoman, and a woman in years, could utter such gross, such unfounded censure: and, if once assured you would dismiss the circumstance from your mind with the contempt it deserves, it would probably never again occur to me."

Though soothed by the delicacy with which Major Sedley tried to relieve the uneasiness which Miss Watkins' insinuations with respect to himself must have given her, Sidney could

not so far recover from the confusion and agitation, into which this cruel and unexpected scene had thrown her, as to attempt any kind of conversation; and, anxious to be alone, to consider what part she ought to act, she was hastily arranging her papers and drawing materials to return to the house, when he approached the table, and, while a high colour overspread his face, said, "If Miss Watkins has not terrified you from considering me as a friend, will you permit me to address you as such? Do not consider me presumptuous in making such a request, or using such a term: the intimacy which I have so long enjoyed at Belle Vue will, I hope, exculpate me from the imputation of impertinence, and justify me in requesting that you will not return to the house till Montague is with you. If you go alone, Miss Watkins will overpower you, and, for the moment at least, grieve and harass you; but the displeasure I know he will feel at a hint of such conduct will soon compel her to silence, and perhaps induce her to be more cautious in future."

"Ah!" thought Sidney, "how little do you

know that his stepping forward in my vindication may only subject me to fresh uneasiness!" She however thanked him, and, not well knowing what part to act, stood irresolute, till, seeing Captain Elmore and Charles approaching, the terror she felt at the idea of returning to the house, uncertain what reception she might receive from her uncle, or to what violence of passion Miss Watkins might not have raised him, became so great, that Major Sedley went hastily forward to meet Charles, and give her time to recover herself.

Sidney collecting her papers, and endeavouring to restrain her emotion, went up to Charles, and, taking his arm, asked him if he would return to the house.

"By George I will," cried he, "for I am desperately hungry!" when, observing she had been recently in tears, he hastily demanded what had happened.

"Do not ask me now," cried Sidney: "when we are alone I will tell you all."

Excessively surprised by the evident uneasiness of Sidney and Major Sedley, which a single glance of his penetrating eye had suf-

ficed to discern, Captain Elmore looked at Sedley with an expression of such keen inquiring earnestness as considerably increased his confusion; the latter, turning quickly from him, went towards the cottage for his gun; and, calling to Charles to go on, and that he would follow him when he had drawn the charge, he asked Captain Elmore to wait for him.

Extremely anxious to learn what had occurred, Charles walked on with Sidney, who related Miss Watkins' accusations; and concluded by saying, "Think, Charles, what must have been my shame and mortification at having such language addressed to me; and at hearing any gentleman, accompanying you, accused of coming to Belle Vue for the purpose of visiting me clandestinely! What must have been Major Sedley's surprise? and what an opinion he must form of me?"

Charles, though at first inclined to laugh, was now completely enraged; and replied, very angrily, "What Sedley thinks is a matter of very little consequence; and, could it induce him to be impertinent, I would soon teach him

propriety; but I cannot understand what Miss Watkins means by such conduct, or whom she hopes to please by these attacks on you."

"I cannot tell what her motives are," said Sidney, alarmed by the fury of his manner; "but I am very sorry that my residence at Belle Vue has been productive of such dissensions."

"Your residence at Belle Vue," cried he, vehemently, "has been productive of nothing but happiness to all those who know how to estimate you, and who are not jealous of beauty they can never hope to rival. As to Miss Watkins, discord is her delight; but, by Heaven, I will this day ring such a peal in her ears as will quiet her for some time to come."

"I cannot express how much I feel obliged to you, my dear Charles," said Sidney, tenderly; "but let me entreat that you will be prudent, as I dread the idea of your offending my aunt."

"My mother," replied he, "cannot be so unjust as to feel displeasure except towards her sister; and as you are my relation, and not Miss Watkins's, she shall not insult you

with impunity. Do you, however, remain quiet; and leave the management of the business entirely to myself."

Then, turning round, he called to Major Sedley and Captain Elmore to quicken their pace; and, waiting till they joined him, entered into conversation with both, though his manner was embarrassed, and totally unlike his usual ease and gaiety.

Captain Elmore, without seeming to notice the change, conversed with his accustomed animation; but Major Sedley remained nearly silent.

On coming to the end of the walk, he took Captain Elmore's arm; and, wishing Sidney and Charles good morning, was turning off to another that led to the gate; when Charles, detaining him, said, "Where are you going Sedley? Did you not promise to breakfast with me?"

"At any other time," cried the Major, "I will attend you with pleasure; but, for this morning, you must excuse me."

Charles perceiving that Major Sedley, so far from seeming inclined to presume on Miss

Watkins' insinuations, appeared much offended by them, recovered his temper, that had been a little ruffled by this idea, which Sidney had unintentionally suggested; and still detaining him, he said, with a laugh, "Is it possible, Sedley, that Miss Watkins can have offended you? How can you attend to the folly of such an antiquated maiden? From time immemorial the sisterhood have been permitted to rail with impunity, and pray do not deny the privilege to one who could not exist without it."

Though Major Sedley could not forbear smiling, he replied with some hesitation, "I should be very sorry, Montague, that my visits were disagreeable to any member of your family; yet, as I never have given Miss Watkins any offence, I can only suppose she did not very well consider what she said: I must however request that you will excuse my attendance for this morning."

"I will not excuse you, by George!" cried Charles. "Miss Watkins' folly is not worth resenting. Pray, Elmore, do you think Sedley

ought to feel offended at an old maid's peevishness?"

"Indeed he ought not," replied Captain Elmore, laughing, "nor is he; but our returning with you this morning is not indispensable, and pray don't insist on it."

"Most assuredly I will," cried Charles; "and as no old maid, unless in the form of a rabbit, can have annoyed you, you shall not go; so come," continued he, putting his arm through the Major's, "pray keep me no longer from my breakfast, as I am confoundedly hungry."

Major Sedley made no further opposition, and said, with a smile, he was sorry for having detained him, but that his motives were very different from those he had attributed to him.

"Well, well," exclaimed Charles, "the point is settled now, and the sooner it is forgotten the better."

On arriving at the house they proceeded into the breakfast-room, where they found all the family assembled except Mr. Montague. Charles immediately asked Mrs. Montague where was his father.

"He went out on business," she replied, "and has not yet returned."

Charles asked if he had long left the house; to which Mrs. Montague replied he had, some hours. With this answer he was satisfied, and made no farther inquiries.

Miss Watkins, who had been somewhat surprised and alarmed at seeing Major Sedley enter with Charles, now asked him where he had been all the morning?

"I was shooting," replied he, angrily; "pray why do you inquire, ma'am?"

Miss Watkins made no answer; and Mrs. Montague asked if he had gone out early.

"I have been out since six o'clock," replied Charles, "and Sedley and Elmore were with me at the rabbit-burrow, in the Sally-park field, till about an hour ago, when we came to the burrow at the back of the cottage."

Mrs. Montague looked much surprised at hearing this intelligence; but instantly said, "Since you have been up so early, gentlemen, I will give you your breakfast, without waiting for Mr. Montague."

"You were not at the cottage, Charles,"

said Miss Watkins, in a suppressed voice, "when I was there."

"No," cried he; "for I was at the burrow behind it; but, had I known that you came to look for me, I would have convinced you where I was, as I saw you, though you, it seems, did not see me."

Frightened at the blunder she now dreaded she had made, Miss Watkins thought her best plan would be to try and conciliate Charles, and, to sooth him, she paid the most officious attention to Major Sedley, endeavouring to engage him in conversation; and, though his countenance exhibited a momentary expression of surprise, he received her attentions with ease and politeness, and seemed totally to forget what had occurred at the cottage.

Sidney, glancing a look at Captain Elmore, observed no small share of archness and raillery lurk round his downcast eyes, while he carefully avoided looking at either Charles or Major Sedley.

Charles, who had at first been too intent on his breakfast to attend to Miss Watkins

no sooner observed her conversing with the Major, than, giving him a most ludicrous look of congratulation, he bent over Sidney's chair, and said, in a whisper, " Poor Wattey has knocked under already."

Whatever terror or uneasiness Sidney felt, there was a something so ludicrous in Charles's look and speech, that it was with the utmost difficulty she restrained a laugh by hastily swallowing part of her tea; and she perceived that Major Sedley and Captain Elmore found it equally difficult to preserve their gravity.

In some time after they were joined by Mr. Montague, and a general conversation took place till breakfast was over. Major Sedley and Captain Elmore rising to take leave, Mr. Montague asked them to return to dinner. This they at first declined; but, on his pressing his invitation, they consented, and then went away.

" I should be glad to know, Miss Watkins," exclaimed Charles, " how Major Sedley has incurred your displeasure, and why you treated him with such rudeness this morning. It was

with the utmost difficulty I could prevail on him to come in to breakfast, though I asked him last night before I left him, and he then accepted my invitation."

"I scarcely spoke to him," said Miss Watkins, reddening; "I only reprehended your cousin for what I considered very great impropriety in conduct, as I did not know you were near the cottage."

"What is all this about, Charles?" said Mr. Montague, much surprised.

Charles, giving a brief detail of what had occurred, concluded by saying "Sedley was so much offended by the accusation of coming here without an invitation, that for some time he refused to enter the house."

Enraged by this account, Mr. Montague turned to Miss Watkins, and said, "Did you, madam, address such expressions to Major Sedley, and pass such a censure on my niece?"

"I only reprehended Miss Montague for what I considered an 'impropriety,'" said Miss Watkins, much confounded; "and I did so

only to serve her; and from a dislike, that any niece of yours should be guilty of any want of decorum."

"And how could you suppose that so improper an accusation in the presence of any gentleman could serve my niece?" angrily demanded Mr. Montague.

"Had I known Charles was near the cottage," said Miss Watkins, still more confounded, "I would not have spoken; and I am extremely sorry I did so at all."

"So am I too," replied Mr. Montague; "but listen to me, Miss Watkins, and attend to what I now say; Sidney Montague is my niece, and as such she shall be treated, and I would not more deeply resent any insinuation against a daughter of my own than I would against her. You once before thought proper to make something of a similar charge, and I thought I then very openly expressed my sentiments; but apparently without effect; let me now advise you to be more cautious in future, and not, by insulting my niece, also insult me. No person has any right to interfere with Miss Montague except

myself; and no person shall do so." Then, addressing his son, added, "I suppose you have apologized to Major Sedley, from his coming in to breakfast?"

Charles replying in the affirmative, Mr. Montague left the room.

Mrs. Montague, who had remained silent during this whole conversation, then said, "I wish, sister, you would learn more prudence, and not interfere where you certainly have no right to do so."

Charles, perceiving that his mother was offended, said, with some warmth, that as his father had always permitted him to invite whom he pleased, and as she had always treated his friends with distinguished attention, no other person had any right to interfere.

"Certainly not, my dear," said Mrs. Montague; "and I should be very sorry that Major Sedley could suppose my sister intended to offend him, as he is a very pleasing gentleman-like man; but, since you have apologized to him, I request the subject may not again be mentioned."

Charles replied, that if Miss Watkins was content to drop the subject, so was he.

Miss Watkins sullenly answered, she would take care not to interfere with young ladies again; and stalked out of the room.

Charles then expressed a hope that his mother was not offended with him; saying, he had no intention of displeasing her, but could not forbear resenting Miss Watkins' unjust and improper censure of his cousin, or avoid noticing it.

"I am not displeased with you, my love," said Mrs. Montague tenderly, "as I am very conscious of my sister's foolish petulance; but, as she is your aunt, Charles, you ought not to take any further notice of it."

"I do not intend it," cried he; "and if you will not suffer Miss Watkins to prejudice you against Sidney, who has not been in the slightest degree to blame, she and I will be as good friends as ever by dinner-time."

"How could you suppose, my dear, that I could feel any displeasure to your cousin?" said Mrs. Montague: then, addressing Sidney,

she apologized for her sister's conduct, alleging that she had been misled by appearances.

This apology Sidney received with great sweetness, saying, she regretted extremely that Miss Watkins had not permitted her to undeceive her, and thus prevent the disagreeable scene that had ensued.

Charles then changed the subject, and, taking a seat beside his mother, used his utmost efforts to entertain her. Mrs. Montague, gratified by his affectionate attention, soon recovered her wonted cheerfulness.

On retiring from the breakfast-room, Sidney sat down to finish the drawing that Miss Watkins' interruption had prevented Major Sedley from completing. Fanny, who had sat a silent spectatress of the morning's scene, went over to the table at which she was sitting, and, looking over the drawing, said, with a contemptuous smile, " Papa ought certainly to feel obliged to Major Sedley for the pains he has taken to finish a view he was so anxious to have well executed; and it was a great pity that Charles's folly exposed him to be so ill

rewarded for his trouble; but, as Charles does not want penetration, I suppose he knows he has nothing to fear, or he would not be so inattentive and careless."

"Charles," cried Miss Watkins, angrily, "may perhaps find, that though he has nothing to fear from the Major, who is undoubtedly a man of sense and penetration, that he may have much to lament in following the guidance of his own headstrong passions."

Though Sidney had latterly made it a rule never to notice any sneer Miss Watkins or Fanny uttered against her, from finding that it merely engaged her in useless and degrading altercations, was yet so much surprised at this inuendo, that she was raising her head to ask Miss Watkins what Charles could have either to hope or fear from Major Sedley, when Mrs. Montague prevented her, by saying with some warmth, "My dear Charles will not, I am well convinced, ever act any part contrary to his father's wishes or to mine, and I must request, sister, that you will not again interfere where you have no right, or subject yourself

to a repetition of what passed this morning; Miss Montague and her uncle are, and must be, the best judges of her conduct."

Sidney, though yet more surprised, determined to command her feelings; and, addressing Mrs. Montague, said, with some emotion, "I should be very sorry to suppose, aunt, that you could believe me capable of wishing to urge Charles into acting any part disagreeable to you; believe me, madam, it is conduct I could not practise; and however sensible of the value of my uncle's judgment, and grateful for his kindness, I shall ever feel honoured by your advice, and anxious to avail myself of it on any occasion when you may have the goodness to interest yourself about me."

Mrs. Montague coldly thanked her, and then, addressing Fanny, entered into general conversation, shewing such a determined disinclination to any farther allusion to the former subject, that neither Miss Watkins nor Fanny thought it advisable to renew it.

Sidney's feelings, at this whole transaction were painful beyond expression: the treatment

she had received in Major Sedley's presence, the insinuations that had been thrown out against her, were such as no prudence, no fortitude, could teach her to think of with indifference; and the only consolation she experienced was from the recollection of his conduct. The interest he had expressed in her feelings, and the warmth with which he had resented the insults Miss Watkins had offered her, soothed her with the hope that he would, in his own mind, acquit her of the designs that had been imputed to her, since so well aware of how falsely she had, in every other instance, been accused. Yet, grateful as she felt for his behaviour through the whole affair, it could not console her for the degradation she had suffered in his presence; nor wholly banish the apprehension, that, however a wish to calm her agitated feelings had prompted his deportment at the moment, he could not on cool reflection believe it possible that any woman of Miss Watkins' gravity, would, without some foundation, have uttered such censures. Nor was this her only source of regret and terror; her uncle's severity to Miss Watkins, however

deserved, she feared would only instigate her to a more unrelenting prosecution of her plan of tormenting and injuring her; and the short conversation that had taken place in the drawing-room, with grief and astonishment convinced her, that Fanny had succeeded in persuading her mother of her wish to seduce Charles from his duty; and that all that now protected her from being openly insulted by Mrs. Montague was a dread of displeasing her husband, joined to a dislike of disobliging a son she so tenderly loved, and on whose affection she seemed to rely as a guard against his acting any part disagreeable to her. How to conduct herself, in a situation so peculiarly unfortunate, she could scarcely determine; but, after much painful fluctuation of thought, resolved that she would not, by any change in her manner, either towards Major Sedley or Charles, plead guilty to undeserved accusation: and that if her uncle should hint at any suspicion of her wishing to engage the affections of his son, she would insist on leaving his house.

To speak to Mrs. Montague would be superfluous, as, whatever her sentiments and feelings

were, she would carefully disguise them, and politely turn off the subject; and, indeed, that she did not wish Mr. Montague to entertain such a suspicion was evident, from her never having given him such a hint. To speak to him herself she did not consider either proper or prudent; as, if he believed her assertions, nothing could withhold him from expressing his displeasure to Miss Watkins in such terms, perhaps, as she could not pass over; and, however she had been injured by Miss Watkins, she revolted from the idea of either obliging her to leave a house in which she had long and happily resided, or rendering it so disagreeable to her as to imbitter every hour of her future life; for Miss Watkins' pride rendered her very keen-sighted to indignity, and was one source of her constant and unremitting ill temper.

On returning to the drawing-room, after dressing for dinner, Sidney found Major Sedley and Captain Elmore had arrived; and though both gentlemen behaved exactly as usual, the train of reflections in which she had been engaged so cruelly depressed her spirits, that, feeling awkward and embarrassed, she went

over to the piano-forte, and employed herself in arranging some new music.

Immediately after the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, Sidney was much surprised to see Mr. Lennon ride up to the hall-door. In a few moments he entered the room; and, after awkwardly bowing to the party in general, said to Mrs. Montague, "I have done myself the honour to come here this evening, ma'am, by young Mr. Montague's own appointment."

Mrs. Montague, though much surprised, politely replied that she was happy to see him at Belle Vue.

Charles, who had heard Mr. Lennon's voice in the hall, now followed him into the room, his whole countenance glowing with delight; and, shaking him heartily by the hand, exclaimed, "I am most happy to see you, my dear fellow; you have much obliged me by your punctuality in coming this evening."

He then, much against Mr. Lennon's inclination, forced him to the dining-room, where the gentlemen were sitting.

"I wonder, mamma," cried Fanny, "what could induce Charles to ask that Mr. Lennon

here: he is no proper acquaintance for him; and I think it very strange to invite such a kind of person."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Montague, "he has been in some way useful to Charles respecting his dogs or horses; or that he may wish for his opinion on some such subject; for, as an acquaintance, Charles could not onsider him; though he may wish to be civil if he either has rendered or can render him any service."

"I believe, ma'am," said Anna, laughing, "Charles has merely asked him, to entertain himself with his folly, as he is the greatest simpleton I ever saw."

"Whatever are your brother's motives," said Mrs. Montague, with great severity, "or however he may choose to entertain himself with Mr. Lennon, remember I positively prohibit you from taking any sort of notice of him: he is in no style of life to entitle him to more than passing civility; and though the giddy frolics of a young man can do him no injury in the eyes of the world, young women must be very guarded in their conduct, and

never degrade themselves by improper or unsuitable acquaintances. Beware, therefore, how you give way to a degree of levity against which I have so often cautioned you; and remember, if you disobey me, you shall feel the consequences."

Awed by her mother's reproof, Anna regretted she had spoken, and merely replied that she would remember her instructions.

Early in the evening the gentlemen came into the drawing-room; and when tea was over Charles proposed a walk, saying there were some alterations he intended to make in the Decoy, on which he wished to have the opinion of the party; adding, "It is a fine evening, girls; will you all come?"

"No, I thank you," said Fanny, haughtily glancing her eyes towards Mr. Lennon, who had instantly risen; "I prefer sitting with mamma, and I am surprised you could ask me."

"Why, so am I too," cried he, quickly; "it was an unaccountable want of thought; but I will not again commit such an error. Come, Sidney and Anna, why do not you hurry away and get on your mufflings, as you,

I hope, will have no objection to join our party."

Sidney and Anna mutually dreading, after what Mrs. Montague had said, to join any party of which Mr. Lennon formed one, and Sidney fearing that Charles had some scheme in view with respect to him which she might find very disagreeable, endeavoured to decline the invitation; Anna told Charles in a whisper her mamma would be displeased; only for that, she would go with pleasure.

Charles, whom any difficulty or opposition merely inflamed to a more determined prosecution of his purpose, instantly asked his mother's permission for Anna to accompany him, saying he would not keep her out late, or subject her to cold, pretending that such a fear could be Mrs. Montague's only objection; she, unable to resist his urgency, granted his request.

Sidney, though disliking to remain with Mrs. Montague, Miss Watkins, and Fanny, and anxious to relieve her spirits by so delightful a walk, was yet fearful of complying, as she knew that every opportunity of censure

would be eagerly caught at, and that Charles's interference now merely served to increase the evil; she also felt averse to give any countenance to his plans respecting Mr. Lennon, and was steady in her refusal. But Mr. Montague, suspecting her opposition proceeded entirely from the occurrence of the morning, which rendered her unwilling to go with Major Sedley under Charles' protection alone, and annoyed by the supposition that such an idea might also occur to the Major, abruptly said, "Why, Sidney, do you refuse to accompany Charles? You are not ill; you cannot fear cold; and, though you may not perhaps particularly wish to walk, you surely will not think it too great a sacrifice of your own inclination to oblige Charles, who is so anxious for your opinion in the alterations he proposes."

Unable to hesitate longer, Sidney rose to leave the room with Anna, who had stood suspended, waiting for her final decision; and Charles exclaimed with a laugh, "Many thanks to you, my good sir: I now better know how to deal with Sidney, and shall apply to you in any future emergency."

Fanny, who had expected that her refusal would have regulated the motions of the whole party, felt not a little mortified at this arrangement; but unable, after the manner in which she had declined, now to propose accompanying them, she sat in sullen silence.

On their leaving the house, Charles endeavoured to induce Lennon to run on in the same strain of folly he had done on the night they had met him at Mrs. Hervey's; and to render him, as he did then, the butt of his ridicule, and the entertainment of his companions; but though Anna, in defiance of her mother's express prohibition, did all in her power to second his wishes, Major Sedley defeated his intentions. Perceiving the dejection of Sidney's spirits, and knowing how much she disliked to be made a party in Charles's frolics, he not only persisted in walking beside her, in opposition to every effort to drag him away, but addressed Lennon with a degree of severity that soon compelled him into utter and abashed silence.

Charles taking a short cut that led through a wood to the Decoy, the party were obliged

to separate, from the narrowness of the path. Charles, taking Lennon's arm, proceeded forward with a rapidity that soon left all his other companions far behind, and Anna engaging in a detail to Captain Elmore about Mr. Lennon, and her brother's views in bringing him to Belle Vue, Sidney was left alone with Major Sedley. After a few moments of embarrassed silence, he said in an earnest, though hesitating manner, " You will not, I hope, think me impertinent or officious, if I venture to ask whether you experienced any farther uneasiness from Miss Watkins this morning. Whatever anxiety I feel on the subject, I would not make such an inquiry could I even affect ignorance of her conduct towards you."

Though agitated and confused by this reference to the morning's transaction, Sidney related without disguise what had passed after their leaving the house. " Could I, therefore," continued she, " forget her insinuations, I should have nothing to regret; but, as I cannot do that, I must ever feel hurt at the recollection, and lament that such language was addressed to me."

" It was to give Montague an opportunity of speaking to his father at once, " said Major Sedley, " that I so long refused to go in to breakfast; not, as he believed, from any offence such conduct could give me." He paused for a moment, then added, with great animation, " you have, on one or two occasions, allowed me the privilege of speaking my sentiments with candour; and, under such a sanction, I will venture to ask how you can put your happiness in the power of a woman, who, from general irascibility of disposition, so assiduously seeks for every opportunity of wounding your feelings ?"

" Miss Watkins has had many trials to sour her temper," said Sidney; " and were she not more than severe and disagreeable, however I might dislike, I could at least, I hope, bear with any uneasiness she might give me. But, suppose, for a moment, a sister of your own, subject to the treatment I this morning received in your presence, and say what must be your feelings? "

" What they are this moment," cried he with energy " indignant contempt towards the

woman who could so far outrage propriety to indulge malevolence; and the advice I would in such circumstances offer to a sister of my own would be to rise superior to undeserved injury, and, with calm and conscious dignity, repel insults that can only degrade the person who offers them."

Gratified though agitated by the warmth of his manner, and the perfect conviction it afforded of how superfluous were her fears of any impression being made on his mind by the gross insinuations Miss Watkins had uttered, Sidney thanked him in a voice scarcely audible, when eagerly interrupting her he said, "Pardon me for entering on a subject which I fear has given you pain, and banish for ever from your mind an occurrence so unworthy of your remembrance, and you will then rise as superior in fortitude as you are in all that is good and amiable to those who seek to make you unhappy."

Excessively embarrassed by a manner in which Major Sedley had never before addressed her, Sidney knew not how to reply, and felt much relieved when Anna, turning round,

begged of her to quicken her pace, as she heard Charles hallooing to them.

The moment they joined him, Charles, without the least previous notice, put his arm through the Major's, and, hurrying him forward, said he wished to speak to him in private. The Major, unwilling to enter into any personal contention with him, was forced to comply.

Mr. Lennon then, stationing himself beside Sidney, said, " I am very sorry to see, ma'am, that you are not as willing to let me speak to you as I could wish ; I am sure, ma'am, I will do my best to be as agreeable to you as Major Sedley ; and, though Mr. Montague says he is my rival, I don't value him a rush."

" Let me advise you, Mr. Lennon," said Sidney, provoked and confounded by this speech in Captain Elmore's presence, " to be more cautious of trusting yourself to Mr. Montague's guidance ; and rest assured that any conversation you address to me will be productive of very ill-rewarded trouble."

" Don't be angry, ma'am," cried Lennon, submissively ; " I did not mean to say one word to vex you ; but I was angry to think

that Major Sedley should be wanting to set you against me, though I am sure I never gave him any offence."

"If you take my advice, Mr. Lennon," said Captain Elmore, gravely, "you will state your grievances to Major Sedley, and not to Miss Montague: he may perhaps redress them; she, I am sure, cannot."

"And why should I do that, sir?" cried Lennon; "I should be very glad to make myself agreeable to Miss Montague; but I am sure I don't want to have any thing to say to Major Sedley."

"But don't you know, Mr. Lennon," exclaimed Anna, "that Miss Montague cannot prevent Major Sedley's speaking to her? and, if you disapprove of his doing so, I should recommend you to forbid it."

"How can you, Anna, said Sidney, "be so utterly regardless of my aunt's prohibition? and, at all events, how can you speak in such a manner?"

"Miss Montague has been telling me," cried the incorrigible Anna, "that she never will favour any person who allows any other

admirer to approach her; and as you declare you do not value Major Sedley's friendship more than a rush, you will, I suppose, sacrifice so paltry a consideration to please her."

"What good would Major Sedley's friendship do me?" cried the purse-proud Lennon: "I am sure I don't want any thing from any man; 'but there is nothing, ma'am,' continued he, addressing Sidney, "I would not do to please you; and if you will only tell me what you like, I am sure I will do it this very moment."

"Oh fie, Mr. Lennon," cried Anna; "ask a lady what she likes, and not know how to please her: I could not have supposed you so deficient in gallantry."

"I think, sir," said Captain Elmore, "you will find it advisable to try and gain Major Sedley's friendship, if for no other purpose than to learn from him the mode best calculated to win a lady's favour, since you so candidly confess him your superior in the art."

"I said no such thing, sir," cried Lennon, angrily; "and if I was to ask any thing from any man, it would be from Mr. Montague, who

is so good to me, and told me every thing, I should say to please Miss Montague."

"Perhaps you will have the goodness to begin, sir," said Captain Elmore: I should feel infinitely benefited by instructions from so able a master."

"I entreat, Captain Elmore," said Sidney, in a low tone of voice, "you will, to oblige me, forbear this conversation: my aunt and uncle would be seriously displeased if they thought Mr. Lennon could behave in this manner; and I assure you his conduct is extremely disagreeable to me."

Whatever love of raillery Captain Elmore felt, or whatever amusement he derived from Lennon's ignorance and presumption, he was too well-bred to refuse instant compliance with this request; and he not only forbore any farther raillery, but commenced a conversation with Sidney, in which Lennon knew not how to bear a part. He therefore walked after them in sullen and dissatisfied silence, till they were joined by Charles, whom Major Sedley had obliged to return, when, calling him aside, he began a ludicrous account of his

ill success, making bitter complaints of Sidney and Captain Elmore.

Charles, though much entertained by his recital, preserved his gravity, and, after condoling with him in his disappointment, told him to come in the morning, and he would then have an opportunity of paying his devoirs to Miss Montague, as he would persuade her to ride with him. Lennon, gratefully thanking him, took his leave, saying he would not fail to keep his appointment next morning.

Charles, returning to his party, upbraided Sidney for not encouraging Lennon as he desired, declaring he would make her repent it; and though Major Sedley warmly and angrily remonstrated with him on subjecting her to the impertinence and folly of such a man, he only laughed, saying he would act as he pleased.

On their return to the house, Captain Elmore asked Charles to come next day to C——, and join a party he proposed to make for the purpose of fishing. Charles declined his invitation, saying he was engaged to ride out with Sidney and his sisters.

" If you will permit us to join your party," said Major Sedley, " we will postpone our excursion to another day, when you will be at leisure to accompany us."

Though Charles would have gladly declined the Major's proposal, whose presence he feared might prove a bar to his operations with respect to Lennon, whom he could not inspirit to enter the lists against him, though he had told him he was his rival, for the purpose of deriving more amusement from that circumstance, he knew not how to refuse his offer, and hoping with Captain Elmore's assistance to prevent his interference, he replied that he should feel happy in the pleasure of their company.

CHAP. IX.

As Sidney was next morning sitting alone in the breakfast-room, a servant entered, and told her there was a woman at the door who begged to see her. On going to the hall she saw Mary Boden standing on the steps, very neatly dressed, and a large basket on the ground beside her. She was much pleased to see her, as she had heard nothing of her since the evening Miss Watkins had censured her so severely for going to her cottage; and she inquired with kindness how she had fared since, and if her husband and children were well.

" They are all very well, I humbly thank you, Miss, said Mary, curtseying; " and may my blessing and the blessing of my poor children ever attend you; for you helped us in our sickness and distress, and was the only cause of all the good luck that has befallen us since."

Sidney replying she was happy to hear they were well, asked could she do any thing to assist her?

"O no, dear Miss; I did not come to trouble you; but I have some fine young turkeys, and some new-laid eggs; and I made bould, Miss, to bring them to you."

Sidney, though much pleased by this simple effusion of gratitude, declined accepting them, fearing that, even from this trifling incident, Miss Watkins might extract matter of censure.

Mary, who took her refusal as proceeding from disdain of her present, said, in an altered voice, "I hope you ben't angry, Miss; if I had the best in the world you were as welcome to it; but in troth I had nothing worth bringing you."

Sorry at perceiving she was offended, Sidney said, in the kindest manner, that she was very grateful for her good-natured remembrance; but that she could not take more of her present than a few eggs, as she did not know what to do with them.

Mary's countenance instantly brightened on her accepting even a part of her present; and

she earnestly pressed her to take the rest, which she declined in terms that could not possibly hurt her feelings. Mary then asked her if she knew where the gentleman lived, who had come into her house from the rain the night she was there,

"Both gentlemen live at C——," replied Sidney: "why do you inquire?"

"Because, Miss, he left his great coat in our house yesterday, and Boden does not know where to bring it to him; and he ought to do any thing to serve him, for he is one of the best gentlemen I ever seen. O dear, Miss, you don't know what he did for us, or the loss we would have been at only for his Honour's goodness. May heaven bless and preserve him for it for ever! We were all ruined but for him!"

"Which of the gentlemen are you talking of? or what do you mean?"

"The gentleman, Miss, that was talking to you, and asked you to let him come and get the carriage from the mistress for you." Sidney, who now knew that she meant Major Sedley, asked her what he had done for her, that she seemed so much obliged to him.

" I would tell you all about it, Miss, only I'm afear'd you'll be tired standing."

Sidney assuring her that she would not, she continued: " You know, Miss, that we are tenants to his Honour, and the cotters' cows always graze on the master's land; but, the meadows being shut up now, the steward ordered all the poor people's cows to feed on the bottoms, nigh-hand the bog. Last Tuesday, Miss, our poor cow strayed away, and fell into one of the bog-holes, and was drownded. Troth, Miss, I thought my heart would break when I see her dead; for, when a poor man loses his cow, he can never hardly get one again; especially if he has a small family. I was sitting spinning at my wheel, and crying to think what would become of the poor childer when I had not a drop of milk to give them; when that gentleman came in, and axed me to give him a drink; and, when he seen me crying, he axed me what ailed me, but I would not tell him, for I didn't think he'd care; and, as I had churned that morning, I gave him a drink of the fresh buttermilk, for he wouldn't take no new milk; and then the thought

I'd never have a drop of my own to churn again set me crying worse than afore; so then, Miss, the gentleman axed me again and again what I was crying for; and he spoke so kind to me that at last I tould him, and he axed me what sum she cost; so I tould him my husband paid seven guineas for her the year we were married; so then, Miss, he took out his pocket-book, and went to give me the whole money; but I refused it, for I didn't like to take it from him, or let him think that I wanted to beg from him, which, indeed, Miss, I had no notion of; but, at last, he got into a passion, and swore I should take it; so then I tould him we would not want so much, for that we'd strive to make up part of it ourselves; but he only laughed, and said to keep all we could spare for the childer; and, leaving the money on the dresser, he was going away, when the young master came in, and tould him to wait for him. As to me, Miss, I cried worse than ever; and Mr. Charles, who came in for a drink too, axed me what ailed me; and, says he, if Boden has beat you, I'll give him a good horsewhipping; but, when I tould

him my cow was drownded, he gave me two guineas, and said he had no more about him at the present; but I wouldn't take them, and tould him all the other gentleman had given me. He said, So much the better, and that I was a great fool, and never should refuse any thing that came in my way; and so then he gave the money to one of the childer, and went away; but the other gentleman give me his coat, and bid me take care of it, for that the sun was getting so hot he wouldn't wear it any longer; and now, Miss, I want to send it to him by my husband."

Sidney listened to Mary's long relation with equal pleasure and interest; and, when it was concluded, she wrote Major Sedley's address on a slip of paper, and, giving it to Mary, told her, if her husband would take the coat to C——, he would find out his lodgings without any difficulty.

Mary, saying that was the very name she had heard Mr. Charles call him, was taking up her basket to go away, when young Montague, coming to the door, asked her what she had got in her basket.

"Some young turkeys, sir," said Mary, curtseying, "that I brought as a present to Miss; but, as she won't take them, I wish your honour would be pleased to accept them."

"Why would you not take them, Sidney?" asked Charles.

"I did not know what to do with them," said she softly; "and I was afraid Miss Watkins might have been displeased."

"What matter whether she was or not?" cried he: then, addressing Mary, added, "I never refuse any thing that is offered to me."

He then called to a servant to empty the basket, and, kindly thanking Mary for her present, passed on, leaving her excessively delighted at his condescension.

Ignorant of Charles's invitation to Mr. Lennon, Sidney was much surprised at seeing him enter while the family were sitting at breakfast; and, more vexed at Charles's determination to pursue so improper a scheme, she took no further notice of him than by a distant bow.

Breakfast was scarcely concluded when Major Sedley, Captain Elmore, and Mr. French,

entered the room together. Charles, immediately calling to his servant, desired him to bring the horses he had ordered to the door.

"I should like to ride to-day, Charles," said Fanny, with a forced smile, "though you have not been so polite as to ask me."

"You need never expect much politeness from me," said he carelessly, "it is not my vocation; nor could I suppose you would have condescended to join our party after the manner in which you refused me last night. However, if you choose to come, I will order your horse, and do you hurry your dress."

Fanny, wishing to ride, endeavoured to laugh off Charles's unceremonious reply, and left the room, to prepare for her excursion.

On the party going out before the hall-door, Charles, calling to Lennon, desired him to take care of Miss Sidney Montague; Lennon, immediately advancing, said, "Ma'am, won't you let me help you to mount your horse?"

Determined in every way that she could to discourage Lennon, whose ridiculous presumption disgusted her, Sidney turned from him to call a servant; but, Major Sedley advancing to

her assistance, she joyfully accepted his offered aid, and Lennon retired to complain to Charles, who only gave him a curse for his cowardly retreat.

As the approach was too narrow to permit the whole party to ride together, Anna, who rode after Sidney, called out to ask why she had changed her accustomed horse and for what purpose he wore so large a net?

Sidney, whose attention had been too much occupied in endeavouring to escape from Lennon's gallantry to attend to the circumstance, requested Charles to explain it.

He replied, that the weather was so warm he had desired the servant to put on the net, as the horse was thin-skinned and could not bear the flies; but that she never rode on a finer animal.

This answer satisfying Anna's curiosity, she made no farther inquiries.

Sidney, who was extremely fond of riding, would have enjoyed real pleasure from this excursion, had not Charles tormented her without mercy by insisting on resigning her entirely to Lennon's care, and riding on the

other side himself, to prevent the possibility of Major Sedley's interference. On finding it impracticable to prevail on Charles to yield his place, the Major gave up the point, and rode on in silence.

Mr. French, who watched Charles with eager attention, soon perceived that, notwithstanding the gravity of his countenance, he was merely turning Lennon into ridicule; and, convinced that he should commit no blunder by following his example, he seconded him with all his powers; riding therefore next Lennon, he betrayed him into the grossest mistakes, instigating him to the most ludicrous display of folly, ignorance, and self-conceit.

Sidney, however provoked and embarrassed, patiently yielded to what she found it impossible to remedy; and though sometimes, compelled to smile, took no other notice of their joint persecutions.

They had ridden on thus for some miles, when Charles proposed taking a gallop, concluding his speech by a loud whistle, to which Lennon appeared to pay particular regard; and then striking Major Sedley's horse with his

whip, and setting spurs to his own, went off at full speed, followed by the remainder of the party.

In vain Sidney endeavoured to keep up with her companions; her horse obstinately refused to quicken his pace; and Lennon, who had received previous instructions, curbed in his own to remain with her. Charles, determined to torment her for refusing to gratify his whim of encouraging Lennon, had given orders to his servant to prepare for her a horse that was restive; and Kennedy, the willing assistant of all his master's plans and frolics, had strictly obeyed his injunctions, covering the horse with a large net, to obviate any chance of detection.

As soon as Major Sedley could restrain his horse, that began to prance violently on being so suddenly struck by Charles, he returned to Sidney, and said, "Why, Miss Montague, have you taken this horse to-day, in preference to the chesnut one you generally ride?"

"I cannot tell why Charles ordered such a horse for me," said Sidney, "unless for the purpose of tormenting me, and in that he has certainly succeeded."

"He did it, ma'am," cried Lennon in a sulky voice, "that I might have the pleasure of speaking to you, and I hope, ma'am, you dont intend to disappoint me."

"From my long acquaintance with Miss Montague, sir," said Major Sedley, sternly, "I think myself authorized to claim the honour of attending her till she rejoins her friends, and I shall not permit any conversation disagreeable to her to pass in my presence."

"And pray, sir, have I not young Mr. Montague's leave to speak to her?" replied Lennon, angrily; "and did he not tell me what I ought to say to please her? And I don't see, sir, how you have any right to interfere."

"It may not perhaps be superfluous to remind you, Mr. Lennon," cried the Major haughtily, "that the respect to which I am entitled I shall enforce; and that Mr. Montague's friendship can give you no claim to address *me* with so little ceremony, however it may induce you to forget *yourself*."

Confounded by the Major's words, and still more by his manner, Lennon stammered out something like an apology, and rode off to complain to Charles.

"In how many ways, Major Sedley," said Sidney, smiling at Lennon's hasty retreat, "am I to become indebted to your good nature?—most sincerely do I feel obliged by your present exertion of it, as I was indeed weary of Mr. Lennon's folly; and I became rather apprehensive that he might have offended you by his equal want of good breeding and of common sense."

"There was no chance of that," cried he; "I merely assumed anger for the purpose of compelling him to silence, as we must sometimes use coarse weapons against coarse antagonists. Montague, indeed, I will confess, tried my utmost command of temper by so obstinately persisting in subjecting you to the persecutions of that ignorant and presumptuous blockhead."

"It is useless to remonstrate with Charles," replied Sidney: "with all his good nature, and kindness of disposition, he perseveringly prosecutes any plan that promises amusement; and of this I am so well convinced, that I have quite given up any attempt to argue with him; endeavouringonly to bear with patience what, though

irksome and teasing, cannot be very seriously injurious; but this forbearance I almost think due to Charles for the innumerable instances of kind and attentive friendship he has shewn me during my residence at Belle Vue."

"Montague," said Major Sedley, smiling, "has certainly acquired the happy art of doing with impunity what few others could venture to attempt; he is the most uncommon compound I have ever met of generous feeling and thoughtless levity."

He then changed the subject, and, delighted at the opportunity that Montague's frolic had given him of an unreserved conversation with Sidney, he chatted with the utmost animation, expressing his sentiments and opinions on various subjects with energy and candour, and seeking to draw forth hers with similar frankness.

Amused by the Major's vivacity, and delighted by his instructive remarks, Sidney forgot the progress of time till a recollection of what Miss Watkins would probably say, should she not return to Belle Vue with the remainder of her party, so terrified her, that she used

every exertion to quicken her speed, in order to overtake her companions, who she expected would have returned back on missing her. The horse, sulky and vicious, resisted all her efforts ; and, though he endeavoured to plunge, persisted in his own pace with an obstinacy that proved how well young Montague's servant had obeyed his master's instructions.

On observing her fruitless exertions to get forward, Major Sedley earnestly urged her to take his horse, as he could easily conquer the obstinacy of her's ; but this she declined, unwilling to give him so much unnecessary trouble ; and, endeavouring to conquer her fears, and reflecting that Charles would relate his share in the transaction, she again entered into conversation with the Major, who appeared doubly anxious to beguile her uneasiness.

They had come within a short distance of Mount-Enesy gate, when, passing a field in which some men were blasting the roots of trees lying very near the road, a loud explosion terrified Sidney's horse, whose sudden plunge nearly dismounted her.

Scarcely had he reared from the ground, when Major Sedley, by a hasty and vigorous effort, caught the reins; and, though dragged from his own horse, and thrown with some violence on the road, he succeeded in checking the vicious animal till Sidney recovered her seat; but nothing could wholly restrain his ungovernable fury, and, forcing the reins from the Major's hand, he went off at full speed.

Though terrified by the apprehension that Major Sedley might have been hurt by his efforts to ensure her safety, and by the danger to which she was herself exposed, Sidney mechanically held the reins, and, as she rode well succeeded in keeping her seat, though unable to make any attempt either to restrain or direct the horse's career.

Major Sedley, having received no other injury from his fall than a slight bruise on his shoulder, remounted his horse, and leaped into the next field, with a view of following Sidney, so as not to irritate the vicious animal that she was riding, and, if possible, to keep him on even ground. Scarcely had he quitted the road when a man, working in one of the ditches,

raising his head, and perceiving Sidney's inadequate efforts to restrain her horse, threw his hat, with an intention of stopping him; but the animal, still more enraged by the blow, turned round, and, darting through Mount-Enesy gate, ran furiously forward into the demesne till he came to a large river, which suddenly stopped his impetuosity; but for the violence of this shock poor Sidney was so unprepared, that she was instantly flung several paces forward into the river.

Major Sedley, having from the field observed the course which Sidney's horse had taken, followed with a velocity that brought him to the spot almost at the moment of her fall, and plunging into the water, which was now very shallow from the extreme heat of the weather, he lifted her in his arms, and, carrying her to a seat under a tree close by, endeavoured to restore those faculties of which terror had deprived her.

In a few moments Sidney recovered her recollection, and, raising her head from the Major's arm, said with a faint smile, "Charles' frolic has nearly proved fatal;" then, more

distinctly remembering what had passed, added, in a tone of anxiety and alarm, " I hope, I trust, Major Sedley, that you have not seriously suffered by your generous efforts to ensure my safety."

" No," cried he, in a voice faultering with emotion, " in no other way suffered than from the terror, the horror, I felt at witnessing the danger to which you were exposed, without a possibility of assisting you. But say, are you indeed safe? Tell me, have I any thing to apprehend ?"

The violent, though restrained, agitation of Major Sedley's voice, manner, and countenance, became instantly contagious, and scarcely could Sidney articulate that she had received no other injury than terror, from the momentary shock her fall had given her, as the water had happily prevented any other mischief than merely wetting her clothes.

On hearing this assurance his countenance glowed with an expression of fervent delight, and, pressing her hand between both his, he stood silent, apparently unable to express his feelings ; then, colouring violently, said, in a low voice, " Forgive me ; I am not at this moment perfect master of myself."

Excessively agitated, Sidney rose from her seat, saying, in a hurried manner, "What am I to do? how can I get back to Belle Vue?"

"To Belle Vue," cried Major Sedley, struggling to speak with calmness; "you cannot think of returning at present, it is utterly impossible; but can you, with my assistance, endeavour to reach the house. Mrs. Enesy will gladly pay you every attention you require, and I will go on to Belle Vue, and send Montague for you: to what has not his inexcusable folly exposed you!"

To this proposal Sidney did not object, from having nothing better to propose; and, taking hold of his offered arm, she proceeded with difficulty towards the house, much impeded in her progress by the weight of her clothes, that, clinging round her feet, so completely retarded her efforts to advance, that, had it not been for the Major's assistance, she would have found it impossible to get forward.

Meeting the man who had endeavoured to stop Sidney's horse, Major Sedley desired him to go in search of his own, that had strayed

through the grounds on being so precipitately forsaken by his master.

"I will, your honour," said the man; "but sure," added he, looking earnestly at Sidney, "the lady has not been hurt by the fall?"

"I have not, I am much obliged to you," said Sidney, smiling; "but I am, as you see, so very wet from having been thrown into the water, that I am scarcely able to walk."

"He was the wickedest beast surely I ever see," said the man, "and was bent from the first on throwing your ladyship; but, if you will go up to the big house, the mistress will take good care of you, for she is one of the best ladies in the whole neighbourhood; and don't, ma'am, offer to go any more on that dirty sulky beast, for he is not fit for the likes of you."

Sidney thanking him for his advice, which she was well inclined to follow, the man proceeded on his embassy.

On coming within view of the house, they perceived Mrs. Enesy's eldest son, a boy about ten years old, playing before the door. On recognizing them, he came running forward;

but, stopping before he had quite reached them, he burst into an immoderate fit of laughter at Sidney's grotesque appearance, her hair hanging down, her hat so soaked with wet, that, unable to bear its weight, she had gladly resigned it to Major Sedley to carry; and all the rest of her habiliments dropping with wet, and covered with the dust of the road.

" I am rather a strange figure, my dear William, said Sidney, smiling at the mirth her appearance had excited; but I have been thrown from my horse into the river."

" Thrown have you?" cried William, instantly recovering his gravity; " but sure you are not hurt, I will run to mamma, and get you dry clothes in a moment."

" Do, my dear boy," cried Major Sedley, " but do not unnecessarily alarm your mother, as Miss Montague has fortunately escaped any serious injury."

William, saying he was very glad of it, ran hastily forward to the house, and returned in a few moments, followed by Mrs. Enesy.

" Will you, my dear Mrs. Enesy," said Sidney, " extend your charity to an unfortu-

nate heroine, whose present appearance does not, I must confess, plead much in her favour?"

"I am delighted to find, my dear girl," said Mrs. Enesy, affectionately taking her hand, "that your appearance alone has been injured, as William's breathless eagerness and unintelligible story really alarmed me; but hurry into the house, and change your clothes, and you will then tell me how the accident has happened."

Then looking at Major Sedley, and perceiving his clothes also were very wet, she added, "I must resign you, Major, to the care of Mr. Enesy's man, who will supply you with whatever you require."

The Major, thanking her, said he would prefer going into C——, not more than half a mile distant, and would return as soon as he had changed his clothes: then, attending Sidney to the hall-door, he consigned her to Mrs. Enesy's care, and mounting his horse, which the man had just led up, was out of sight in a moment.

As soon as Sidney had changed her clothes,

she related with great humour to Mrs. Enesy the real cause of the accident, and the reason why she had been left alone with Major Sedley, expressing her gratitude for his care and attention. Mrs. Enesy bestowed a warm eulogium on the Major's general character and conduct, and, after expressing some surprise at Charles Montague's levity in so thoughtlessly exposing her to such danger, hurried her to the drawing-room, where she had ordered some refreshments, which she said she hoped would preserve her from any chance of cold.

They had not been long sitting in the drawing-room when Charles entered, and, scarcely waiting to address the usual salutation to Mrs. Enesy, went up to Sidney, and, taking her hand, inquired with a voice and countenance from which his usual levity and frolic had wholly vanished, if she had received any injury from her fall.

"I have not, indeed," said Sidney, smiling at his unusual gravity; "but I cannot say, my dear Charles, that I am much indebted to you for my safety. How could you order such a horse for me?"

"Upon my honour," cried he eagerly, "I had no idea he was such a wicked, vicious wretch; and I am seriously angry with Kennedy for venturing to give you such an infernal brute. I had no objection to tease you for disappointing me; but surely you cannot suspect me of wilfully endangering your safety."

"Indeed I do not," said Sidney, affectionately; "and I am equally rejoiced for your sake and my own that I have met with no other accident than a wetting."

"You are a good girl, a dear girl," cried he, with some emotion; "and you may trust me for never again exposing you to any dangerous or disagreeable adventure."

Mrs. Enesy asking him to partake of the refreshments on the table before him, he consented; and Sidney then asked him how he had heard of the accident, or knew she was at Mount Enesy?

Before he had time to reply, Major Sedley entered the room. On perceiving his change of dress, Charles asked him what the deuce had happened to him? Surely he had provided no sulky plough-horse for his accommodation?

"If you had," replied he, with some warmth, "it would have been a matter of very little consequence; but, that you should have provided such an one for Miss Montague, I must avow surprises me."

"Be not surprised at any thing in this world, my dear fellow," cried Charles, who had now recovered all his wonted gaiety; "and, above all things, never be surprised at any thing I do."

"No, not in future, said Mrs. Enesy, "I think we shall have no reason."

"Well, well," cried he, "I am heartily delighted it was no worse. You were asking me, Sidney, how I had heard of the accident, when the Major's surprise put me, as the common folks say, through my story; but, I will now gratify your curiosity:—From the time we left you, we rode on full gallop till we came very near Belle Vue, when, for the first time reining in, I perceived Sedley was not with us, the honour of whose company I thought I had taken sufficient pains to secure. I returned to see what had become of you, and had not ridden far back when I met that booby, Lennon. I asked him what brought him there, when he

should have been squiring Miss Montague? He made a most doleful complaint of Sedley's refusing to leave her, saying he had threatened him very hard for only just speaking to her. I could not forbear cursing the blockhead for his stupidity, and pursued my journey, wondering what the deuce could have delayed you; when, meeting a man at this gate, I asked him if he had seen you? He said Yes, and that you had been thrown from your horse into the water, and were now with Mrs. Enesy. I was, upon my soul, not a little startled at this intelligence; and am heartily delighted to find, my poor girl, that you have been more frightened than hurt on the occasion. Had it not been for you," continued he, addressing Major Sedley, "they would have ridden as quietly and sociably home as any other Darby and Joan in the kingdom."

"How, Charles!" cried Sidney warmly, "could Mr. Lennon have insured my safety?" Then, relating the circumstances which had occurred, concluded by saying, "had I bee under Mr. Lennon's protection, I fear I should not have escaped as I have done."

Charles listened to her recital with some emotion, and, when it was concluded, eagerly grasping the Major's hand, exclaimed, "I beg your pardon, my dear Sedley, if I have thoughtlessly offended you for your care of Sidney: no thanks of mine could be any adequate compensation; but, upon my soul! it is an obligation I can never forget."

The resentment Sedley could not forbear feeling to Charles, for his levity in having so inconsiderately exposed Sidney to danger, this speech wholly obliterated; and affectionately shaking hands with him, he replied, it was impossible to feel more than momentary resentment to one of so frank and candid a disposition.

Charles then, half apologizing to Mrs. Enesy for the trouble his frolic had given her, told Sidney that he would ride back to Belle Vue, and return in his curricle for her. Mrs. Enesy, declaring she would not permit Sidney to leave her till evening, pressed Charles, and Major Sedley also, to dine with her. This invitation the Major accepted, but Charles declined, saying he must go back to Belle Vue,

to prevent any false reports from reaching his father; and also to console poor Lennon for his disappointment: then added more seriously, he would stay with pleasure, were it not that some company were to dine at Belle Vue; and took his leave.

"What a giddy volatile young man Charles Montague is," said Mrs. Enesy; "and yet I believe him possessed of an excellent understanding, and a very good heart; for, though the retired life I lead at present prevents me from knowing the Montague family so intimately as I could wish, I have heard him spoken of in even rapturous terms by all the poor people of the neighbourhood, who declare he is, on every occasion in which they require his services, their intercessor with his father; at the same time remarking, that it is impossible to deceive him, he is so quick in discovering truth from falsehood, and has so general a knowledge of the surrounding country."

"Of the truth of this assertion," cried Major Sedley, "I can, from my own personal knowledge, bear ample testimony, from having been so frequently the companion of his ram-

bles, and having seen him, when either hungry or weary, go into the first cottage he met, and frankly ask and accept the homeliest fare it afforded; amusing himself and delighting the inhabitants by cheerfully joining in and encouraging that love of raillery and genuine humour so peculiarly inherent in the Irish character. He is thus, in some degree, personally acquainted with almost every inhabitant of this country for several miles round; and qualified to judge, from his own immediate observation, of their wants and their grievances: and to relieve either, I have at all times, seen him equally ready. That such a character should be popular in any neighbourhood is not wonderful; but I should be indeed surprised if he was little less than adored among an Irish peasantry, who will ever bear more genuine regard to the man who treats them with affability, and indulges their love of mirth, than to those even who relieve their wants; but when both are united, they must indeed prove irresistible; and most happy would it be for the country in general if more men of rank and fortune followed Montague's example, and felt an honest

pride in being the favourite of their tenantry and dependents."

Sidney, who affectionately loved Charles, was delighted with this warm eulogium, and seconded Major Sedley in the most animated terms.

The remainder of the day Sidney thought passed more agreeably than any she had ever remembered; and, when the first hurry of her spirits had subsided, the idea of being more than an object of friendly regard to Sedley, which she thought the agitation of his manner and his whole conduct had evidently betrayed, animated her with an internal sensation of happiness, such as she had never before experienced.

The polished elegance of Major Sedley's manners, the refined cultivation of his mind, and the delicacy and feeling he had on every occasion evinced, had strongly, though imperceptibly, interested Sidney in his favour. Thrown off her guard by the unrestrained intercouse in which they lived, and by Fanny's obvious wish to attract his attention, which she thought the largeness of her fortune might not render a

hopeless attempt, she had never considered him in any other light than a friend ; and though the guarded caution with which he had invariably acted towards Fanny, in order to preclude any possibility of her forming hopes he never intended to realize, had long convinced her how fruitless were Fanny's expectations of ever adding him to the list of her admirers, she had not, from that circumstance, been led to suspect the state of her own feelings. Happy in his society, and grateful for his attention, she had never looked beyond the present hour, till Miss Watkins' attack, by awakening sensations she had not before experienced, convinced her how truly she appreciated his esteem ; but, deluding herself with the belief that she would feel equal anxiety to eradicate such a suspicion from the mind of any other person, she sought not too accurately to develop her feelings ; and felt equal surprise and pleasure in the newly-excited idea that the regard and esteem, which Sedley had almost from their first acquaintance manifested, was now mingled with a degree of tenderness which she had never before suspected he had felt.

Early in the evening young Montague drove over to Mount Enesy; and agreeing, at Mrs. Enesy's request, to stay a short time there, gave a most ludicrous account of Lennon's grief and despair, on hearing of the accident that had occurred to Sidney.

"May I venture to inquire," said Mrs. Enesy, "how Mr. Lennon was introduced to Miss Montague's acquaintance? I do not recollect ever meeting him at Belle Vue."

"Why no," cried Charles; "my father and mother never liked those kind of gentry much; and Miss Watkins and I had a downright quarrel to-day about my dignity, which she maintains is a little soiled by owning Lennon as an acquaintance. I almost suffocated her with passion by laughing at her antediluvian notions and aristocratic pride, and so forth; asserting that Lennon's present wealth was a sufficient introduction into any company: and so, perhaps, some people might think, though in truth I am not one of them; and had he not entertained me by his folly at Mrs. Hervey's, I never would have thought more of him; but finding him just a fit fool to carry

on a jest, I introduced him to Sidney, and had sufficient interest to procure his admission to Belle Vue, where my father and mother are persuaded he comes for the purpose of assisting me in regulating my dog-kennel."

"And surely, even from your own account," said Mrs. Enesy, "you cannot consider him a proper acquaintance for your cousin; and ought not to subject her to unpleasant remarks, by having them seen publicly together."

"I hope, my dear ma'am," said Charles, laughing, "you don't consider Sidney's heart in any danger."

"No, certainly not; but I think she may be in danger of having Mr. Lennon speak of her in a manner neither she nor you would like, by professing himself her avowed admirer."

"You may trust me," cried Charles, "for silencing Lennon the moment he passes the bounds I prescribe; and if he is silly enough to be blind to the ridicule he excites, he must only take the consequences of his own folly."

"It is not fair, Montague," said Major Sedley, "to engage a man with unequal wea-

pons; and if Lennon has not sufficient understanding to be on his guard against your genius for ridicule, which might deceive a wiser man, you surely take an undue advantage."

"Very sagely observed, my good sir," cried Charles; "and though in love and war alone stratagems are admitted as lawful, I shall never hesitate to use any that may serve my own purposes; and I expect diversion from Lennon that it would not be easy to make me give up."

"I shall not make any effort to do so," said Mrs. Enesy; "I shall only advise Sidney to be on her guard."

"Young ladies should always be on their guard," replied Charles; "but, nevertheless, I will gain my point."

He then rose and took leave; but Major Sedley remained at Mount Enesy.

On their arrival at Belle Vue, Mr. Montague met them in the hall, and, affectionately embracing Sidney, expressed great pleasure at her safety; asking how it could happen that such a horse had been provided for her.

Charles, hastily saying it was a mistake, Sidney made no attempt to undeceive her uncle, merely thanking him for his kindness and affection. She then proceeded into the drawing-room, where many common-place congratulations were addressed to her by all the people present; Captain Elmore, indeed, expressed himself with a warmth and friendliness that convinced her he had really felt interested in her safety.

CHAP. X.

On the following morning, when unrestrained by the presence of either her father or brother, Fanny animadverted with bitter volubility on the incident of the preceding day, hinting a suspicion that Sidney had wilfully incurred the danger, to afford her an opportunity of judging how far she had acquired an influence over Sedley's mind; and even insinuated, that, if she succeeded in duping him, Charles would be probably left to console himself in the best manner he could; affecting to pity him extremely for his blindness and folly.

To these mean and malicious sneers, the effect of resentment at the observation she could no longer avoid making, that Major Sedley felt totally uninterested in all that related to her; and at the still more galling conviction of his very different feelings towards

her cousin. Sidney returned not the slightest answer, for, as they were not clothed in the form of a direct charge, but merely conveyed in general discourse, she held it equally useless and degrading to avow that she understood them, and therefore maintained invariable silence. Mrs. Montague, offended at the supposition that any person could have it either in their power or inclination to act such a part to her beloved Charles, so totally declined taking any part in the conversation, that Miss Watkins, however well inclined to second Fanny, could not keep the subject from languishing, and soon dying wholly away.

Early in the course of the day Mr. Lennon came over to Belle Vue, and, requesting to speak to Charles in private, they retired into another room; when, after much hesitation and circumlocution, Lennon begged his advice how he was to proceed to prevent Major Sedley from always speaking to Miss Montague.

"How the deuce can I do any thing for you?" cried Charles, gravely; "you know Major Sedley is a visitor of my father's, and therefore I cannot forbid him the house."

"Very true indeed, sir," said Lennon, with a lengthened face; "I forgot all that, but perhaps, sir, you may think of something, for I am sure I can't."

"I think your best plan," said Charles, "would be to insist on your right of speaking to Miss Montague, and boldly standing your ground at once, and not flying off in the cowardly manner you did yesterday."

"Why, sir, Major Sedley as good as bid me go; at least he told me he would not let me say any thing he did not like to Miss Montague; and I was afraid then it was no use for me to stay any longer."

"Afraid!" repeated Charles; "if a lover can confess himself to be afraid of any man, I have done with him."

"No sir, no," cried Lennon, in visible consternation; "I am not afraid of Major Sedley, and I will do any thing you desire."

The discovery of Lennon's unbounded fear of Sedley inspired Charles with a project from which he hoped to derive uncommon entertainment, and, after apparent deliberation, he said, "The only advice I can give you

is to send a challenge to Major Sedley, and get rid of him at once."

"Send him a challenge, sir!" said Lennon, turning very pale; "and if I was to be shot, what good would it do me getting Miss Montague?"

Charles scarcely suppressing a laugh said, he thought it not improbable that Major Sedley would give up his cousin rather than fight for her; but that, even if he should not, he had an infallible means of securing him from danger.

"How, sir?" cried Lennon, eagerly; "I thought that nothing could save a man from being shot."

"So did I too, till I tried it myself."

Lennon begging of him to explain himself, he continued: "The last time I was in Dublin a fellow picked a quarrel with me at a tavern, and sent me a challenge. Calling on a particular friend of mine to be my second, he put me up to what I am going to tell you; but you must first promise never to mention a syllable of it to any person."

Lennon solemnly promising he never would,

Charles went on : " He told me to take several quires of paper, and, wetting them completely through, to envelop my whole body with them, under all my clothes ; and that, if a cannon-ball was then fired at me, it would instantly rebound. I accordingly followed his advice ; and the fellow might have been shooting at me ever since without doing me the slightest injury."

This account, which Lennon had the ignorance and credulity to believe, wrought an instant revolution in his mind ; and Charles, dwelling on his belief that Sidney would immediately marry him after so heroic a proof of his attachment, and hinting that he did not think Sedley would accept the challenge, as he had every reason to think him a great coward, Lennon consented to send the message ; partly from a hope that the Major would refuse to meet him, and still more from the belief, that, even if he did not, he could be in no danger. Besides, the admiration he felt for Sidney, the prospect of an alliance with such a family as the Montagues, which he had the extreme simplicity to believe would immediately follow

this step, so flattered his vanity, that he no longer hesitated to consent to a project he thought would inevitably ensure it; and, joined to these considerations, Charles threw out a hint, that, if he refused to pay this customary compliment to his cousin, he would disdain his further acquaintance.

No sooner had Charles gained his point than he told Lennon he must send the message immediately, as there never should be the smallest delay on these occasions.

"Will you do it for me, Mr. Montague?" cried Lennon, "for I never did such a thing in my life."

"You must first write the challenge; and, as I will be your second, I will carry it to Sedley."

"Indeed, sir, you do me a great deal of honour, and I am very much obliged to you; but I don't know what to say; if you will tell me I will write it now."

"By George you are a spirited fellow," cried Charles; "and I hope I may dance at your wedding before this day month."

"I hope so, indeed, sir;" and I am sure I am more obliged to you than I can tell you;

and, if ever I have it in my power, I will be most happy and most proud to serve you in the same way."

Charles, saying he would tell him what to say with pleasure, procured writing materials; and Lennon, sitting down, wrote the following letter to Major Sedley, which he dictated.

To Major Sedley.

Sir—Hearing, from the best authority, that you have the audacity to pay your addresses to Miss Sidney Montague, whom I intend to marry myself; and being determined that no man on earth shall have her while I am alive, I desire you either to take your oath that you will never speak to her again; or, in case of a refusal, that you meet me to-morrow morning at any hour or any place that my second, Mr. Charles Montague, shall appoint: and I desire you to take notice, that, if you refuse me the satisfaction of a gentleman, I will post you at every market-cross, and turn you out of every company I see you in.

"THOMAS LENNON."

Lennon highly approving this letter, and Charles promising to carry the answer in the

evening, set out for C——, Lennon returning to his own house.

Charles, whose love of mischief had in this instance been gratified beyond his most sanguine hopes, arrived at C—— with spirits elevated to the highest pitch, from an expectation of the amusement he should derive from the conclusion of this affair. He found Major Sedley at home and writing; and, to his infinite joy, Captain Elmore and Mr. French were also in the room.

Going over to the table at which the Major was seated, and throwing down the letter before him, he called out, " There Sedley, my boy, there is a letter I think will entertain you."

Sedley hastily took up the letter, and broke the seal; but scarcely had he read three lines, when, bursting into a fit of laughter, he exclaimed, " What the deuce, Montague, is the meaning of all this?"

" Read the letter first," said Charles, " and I will then explain the business."

Mr. French, whose curiosity was powerfully excited by the appearance of mirth connected

with this letter, approached the table; and Major Sedley making no opposition, he looked over him while reading, concluding that he ran no chance of committing an impropriety in thus gratifying his impatience. His loud and reiterated bursts of laughter raising Captain Elmore's curiosity to an equal height, he eagerly held out his hand for the letter, which Sedley giving him, he instantly joined in their mirth.

Charles, after heartily participating in the laughter this letter had excited, replied to their united demands of what could have induced such an epistle, by relating the visit Lennon had paid him, saying he had advised him to send the challenge, to promote a frolic that promised such excellent diversion; and concluded by asking the Major to give him an answer.

"What answer would you have me give?" cried he, laughing; "you would not have me meet such a man as Lennon;" then added, seriously, "You surely cannot suppose that I would run any risk of so wantonly endangering the life of a fellow-creature."

"O hang it, no," cried Charles; "that

would be carrying the jest too far; but you know we can avoid any chance of that by merely putting a little gunpowder into the pistols."

"No, no," cried Sedley: "it is a ridiculous and an improper affair, and I will not take any part in it. If Lennon so far forgets himself as to treat me with any sort of impropriety, I will take other methods of chastising his insolence; but I will not wantonly enter into any contest with so ignorant and presumptuous a blockhead."

"Confound your scruples,"cried Mr. French, eagerly; "what objection can you have to humour so excellent a jest? or what better method can you take of getting rid of such a fellow?"

"You surely cannot believe me such an ass," cried Charles, "as to propose or countenance any thing farther than a joke. If I did not perfectly know Lennon, I would not have engaged him in such an affair, and I should be very sorry to commit you in any manner inconsistent with your character; though I have no scruple in playing off a self-opiniated

fool for my own and my friends' amusement; and I appeal to Elmore for his opinion."

"I scarcely know what opinion to give," cried Captain Elmore; "for, though Lennon is evidently a self-opiniated fool, he may not perhaps be utterly devoid of spirit."

Major Sedley begging leave to decline any farther conversation on the subject till he had finished the letters he was writing, Charles retired to a distant window, with Captain Elmore and Mr. French, and related to them in a low voice his advice to Lennon respecting the paper, and his acquiescence in it. Captain Elmore, convinced from this relation that there was no chance of Lennon's spirit engaging Major Sedley in any serious affair, which with such a man he would have considered utterly beneath him, agreed, at Montague's earnest request, to try and persuade him to humour the jest so far as to see how Lennon would act; and on the Major's rising from the table, he endeavoured, in concert with Mr. French and Charles, by every art of persuasion and raillery, to induce his acquiescence with their wishes.

"How, Elmore," cried Major Sedley, impatiently, "can you join in persecuting me in this manner? Do you think such a scheme a proper one, or wish me to engage in it?"

"I do," cried Elmore, "as I think it a good jest, and nothing more: I am curious to see how Lennon will act, and think it your best way of getting rid of an impertinent, foolish fellow, who may think himself authorized to tease you. Indulge Montague, and get rid of him at once; and no person except ourselves will know any thing on the subject."

"Why did you not make Lennon send the challenge to me, Montague?" cried French, eagerly, "and I would never have hesitated a moment; but Sedley is such a punctilious fellow, there is no dealing with him."

Charles and Captain Elmore again renewing their entreaties and expostulations, their urgency at length overpowered the Major; and after some time listening to them in silence, he said, "It is not in human patience, or at least in mine, to bear any farther persecution, and therefore settle the business as you please."

"Give me pen and ink," cried French, in

rapturous delight at the prospect of amusement that this scheme afforded, "and I will answer the letter."

"That is a good fellow," said Charles; "for Lennon would know my hand; but don't fail to tell him that Sedley will fight to the last drop of his blood for Sidney, and so forth, to put him up to the business."

"You had better take care, French," exclaimed Major Sedley, "how you take such a liberty with Miss Montague's name. Her own relation may do so; but neither you nor I would have any excuse to plead for such impertinence,"

"Ha, ha," cried French, archly; "is it come to this already?"

The Major, vexed and provoked, turned away without speaking; and Mr. French, after indulging in a hearty fit of laughter, set about composing an answer to Lennon's outré epistle. In vain did he and Charles compose letter after letter; the Major positively declared his name should not be used in the manner that suited their wishes. After a great deal of laughter and altercation, Cap-

tain. Elmore declaring that something must be decided on, as it was time to dress to attend a party to which they had all been invited, Major Sedley took the pen from French, and, in a few concise lines, informed Lennon he would meet him for the purpose of giving him his sentiments respecting the letter he had ventured to address to him.

"This will do very well," cried Charles, on reading the lines; "but remember that, as Lennon's friend, I appoint the meeting to take place in the woods of Belle Vue, on the open space near the ruined tower, and the time as early in the morning as you please."

"I shall not dispute the point any farther," cried he, "as I am heartily weary of the discussion already; but take care that you do not compel me to chastise Lennon in a manner I should find extremely repugnant to my feelings."

"Don't be uneasy," cried Charles, "for unless you choose to commence pedagogue, and take the rod of correction, you will not, I pledge my word, be called on to give him any other discipline."

Major Sedley shook his head in a manner that indicated how little reliance he placed on Montague's discretion, and Mr. French immediately offered himself as his friend on the occasion.

"You must excuse me," said Major Sedley, "as I have not the least inclination to fight this day's battle over again. Then addressing Captain Elmore, added, "As I place rather more confidence in your discretion than in French's, and as I don't think you would go quite so far for the sake of a jest, I will request you to accompany me."

"You do me too much honour," said Elmore, gravely bowing.

"You shall not however deprive me of the pleasure of witnessing the interview," said French, "as I am resolved to go as a spectator rather than not go at all."

"Pray do," cried Charles; "and I will persuade Lennon that you come to see fair play on all sides, and that will be just equal to the meridian of his knowledge and capacity."

Then shaking hands with the three gentlemen, he mounted his horse, and returned to Belle Vue.

Immediately after dinner he rode over to Mr. Lennon with Major Sedley's answer, which, at first, startled him not a little by the high and decisive tone in which it was written; but Charles, taking advantage of its ambiguity to persuade him that the Major feared to meet him, and meant to offer unreserved obedience to his demand respecting Miss Montague, he became better satisfied, though determined not so far to trust to Charles's assertions as to omit taking the precaution he believed would infallibly secure him from danger, if Charles either deceived him or was deceiving himself.

CHAP. XI.

VERY early on the following morning, Charles quitted his apartments:—finding Lennon had not yet arrived, though he had promised to meet him at Belle Vue, he ordered his horse, and, unaccompanied by a servant, took the road to his house, carrying with him a case of pistols loaded with powder, from an apprehension that Major Sedley would not come so equipped.

He had not ridden far when he met Lennon, and scarcely could he restrain a violent burst of laughter on seeing his coat buttoned up to his chin, and perceiving he was considerably increased in size from the paper he had put underneath it for his protection; but, preserving his gravity, he congratulated him on his gallantry, declaring 'how much his cousin would feel flattered by the compliment he paid to her charms.

Feeling perfectly secure in the methods he had taken to ensure his safety, Lennon was in high spirits; and, impressed with the belief that no woman could resist a man who had once fought a duel, and that such an adventure would raise him to the highest pinnacle of human glory, his pride and self-conceit knew no bounds. He ran on in such a strain of bravado, and seemed to consider himself an object of such consequence, and so well deserving of attention, that Charles, unable to repress laughter, could only account for his mirth by saying how much he enjoyed the idea of Major Sedley's fears, who was totally ignorant of such a mode of protecting himself from danger, it being a secret known only to himself, and the gentleman who had imparted it to him.

On their arrival at the place appointed, they found that none of the other gentlemen had yet made their appearance. Lennon, considering this as a full confirmation of Charles's assertions of Major Sedley's cowardice and dread of him, continued to gasconade in a strain which equally amused and dis-

gusted Charles; concluding every boast he uttered by a threat, that, if he did not immediately arrive, he would proceed into the town of C——, for the purpose of caning him, and requesting that Charles would accompany him there, lest he might be opposed by the other officers; seeming to consider his protection as a sufficient guard against any danger.

Lennon's courage and insolence had arrived at the highest pitch when both received a sudden damp by perceiving the three officers leaping into the field where they were. Struck with terror by Major Sedley's manly and martial air as he rode towards them, all his former awe of him returned, and he, for some moments, forgot how secure he considered himself against any injury.

Mr. French, galloping forward, threw himself off his horse, and, shaking hands with Charles, accosted Lennon with equal cordiality, declaring, such was his regard for Montague, that he had come for the purpose of seeing justice done to his friend, and determined to take part even against his brother-officers, if they ventured to attempt any thing unfair.

Lennon, who believed Charles's influence as all-powerful with others as he had found it with himself, felt his courage revived by Mr. French's assurance; considering himself, French, and Charles, as more than a match for Major Sedley and Captain Elmore.

Captain Elmore, determined to gratify Charles by humouring the jest, and feeling some curiosity to see how Lennon would behave, prevailed on Major Sedley to allow him to advance alone to speak to him. Joining the young men, he bowed in a grave and general manner, and, after apologizing for the delay, requested Lennon to inform him what ground of offence his friend Major Sedley had unhappily given him.

Mistaking his gravity for fear, and this demand for an opportunity for Major Sedley to disavow any pretensions to Sidney's favour, which Charles had taught him to expect, Lennon pertly replied, he had come for the purpose of obliging Major Sedley to forbear any further attention to Miss Montague, whom he was determined to marry himself; and that, if

he refused to do so, he must demand the satisfaction of a gentleman.

"Most undoubtedly, sir," said Mr. French, "you are entitled to it, and shall have it."

Charles then, drawing the pistols from his pocket, offered Captain Elmore his choice, saying he had himself charged them.

"Before we proceed so far, sir," cried Captain Elmore, "it is necessary to ascertain whether the gentlemen have taken any undue methods of guarding against the danger usually attendant on these affairs. You, sir, as Mr. Lennon's friend, will take the proper steps to examine that Major Sedley has not any thing concealed about him for his protection; and I, as his friend, must beg leave to make a similar search, to convince myself that Mr. Lennon has acted honourably."

Lennon, petrified with astonishment at a demand he had so little expected, stood silent, till Captain Elmore advanced towards him, saying, "I presume, sir, you are a man of too much honour to fear the closest inspection." He caught hold of Charles's arm, saying, "Oh Mr. Montague, what shall I do?"

"By George I don't know," cried he in a low voice: "I had no idea that such a demand would have been made."

"Pray, Mr. Lennon," resumed Captain Elmore, "have the goodness to unbutton your clothes, or I must be under the disagreeable necessity of doing so myself, as I can no longer keep Major Sedley waiting."

Lennon, whose countenance exhibited a most ludicrous aspect of distress, made no reply, but again applied to Charles, who, after speaking to him for a few moments in a low voice, said aloud, "Why do you hesitate, Lennon? you surely cannot have any thing to fear."

Lennon still stood silent, as if rooted to the spot; and Charles, desiring to Captain Elmore to satisfy himself, he roughly pulled open Lennon's coat and waistcoat, when a quantity of wet paper fell to the ground, Lennon being too much terrified and ashamed to make the slightest resistance.

Captain Elmore, lifting some of the paper from the ground, gravely demanded for what purpose it was intended.

Surprised by the long conference between

Captain Elmore and Lennon, Major Sedley turned aside; but Mr. French eagerly requesting he would advance, his astonishment at seeing such a quantity of wet paper in Elmore's hand induced his acquiescence, curious to know for what purpose it was intended, and involuntarily diverted by the looks and gestures of the whole party.

Captain Elmore again renewed his demand; adding, that as it was very unusual for gentlemen to come equipped in such a manner, he must insist on an explanation.

Lennon appearing to have lost all power of pronouncing a syllable, Charles took him a little aside, saying that, since the paper had been so unfortunately discovered, he had better follow the advice he had given him; for, if he did not, he was convinced Captain Elmore would shoot him without any farther ceremony.

This threat in some degree restored Lennon to the use of his faculties, which the shame of detection had hitherto suspended; and, going over to Captain Elmore, he thus addressed him, though stammering to such a degree as to be scarcely intelligible: "Sir, I put that paper in my breast, because—I thought—

I was sure I should have been shot, and I intended to make my will; and Mr. Montague knows this to be true, and will just tell you the same thing."

Thrown off his guard by a scene he had so little expected, Major Sedley burst into a violent fit of laughter, in which he was joined by Mr. French; Charles, with great difficulty, forbearing to follow their example.

"Since that is the case, sir," replied Captain Elmore, with immoveable gravity, "you had better make your will now, and we will afterwards proceed to the business which brought us here."

"I can't, sir," cried Lennon, "indeed I can't; the paper, you see, is quite wet; nobody could do it; I would if I could, and Mr. Montague knows I would, for it was he who desired me to do it."

Major Sedley, whose laughter at Lennon's ludicrous terror had for some moments deprived him of all power of utterance, now felt his mirth change into pity; and, going forward, he thus addressed him: "However I might, under other circumstances, Mr. Len-

non, think myself called on to take very serious notice of the gross impropriety of your late conduct, yet, as your present behaviour convinces me you were unwarily led into it, I shall forbear any other comment on the subject than to advise you to be more cautious in future both of the letters you write, and the people to whom you address them; I now recommend an immediate return to your own house as the best mode of conduct you can pursue."

"I believe it is, indeed, sir," said Lennon, again breathing freely on perceiving the Major had no hostile intentions; "and I am sure I meant no offence to you; all I wished or wanted was, that you would not hinder me from speaking to Miss Montague; and indeed, sir, it was Mr. Montague desired me to challenge you; I never should have thought of it but for him."

"Confound you, you cowardly poltroon!" exclaimed Charles, affecting great anger, "did you not boast that you never would let Major Sedley speak to Miss Montague again? and how can you say it was I who desired you to challenge him?"

And so it was, sir," replied Lennon, whose terror of Major Sedley now induced him to hazard the loss of Montague's friendship; "and don't you know you told me, if I did, Miss Montague would marry me directly? I am sure only for that I never would have done it."

"Whatever were your views in acting the part you have done, sir," cried Major Sedley, "it is now very useless to explain them; but suffer me to warn you against taking any farther liberties with either Miss Montague' name or mine, as that is an impropriety I will not allow to pass unnoticed."

"To cut the matter short at once, sir," exclaimed Charles, "you must either consent to stand the shot, or else you shall never speak to Miss Montague again."

"Stand the shot, sir!" cried Lennon, with renewed terror; "and, if I did, what could hinder me now from being killed?"

"So then, sir, said Captain Elmore, "it was to prevent your being killed, and not, as you told me, to write your will, that you put the paper under your clothes."

"Why, sir—indeed, sir," replied Lennon, with pitiable confusion, "all I did was by Mr. Montague's directions."

"Were I Mr. Montague," exclaimed French, "I would make you repent telling such tales, after all the pains he has taken to serve you. If I were him, I would make you stand a shot this moment."

Lennon, beginning to fear that all his pretended friends were joined in a league to torment him, declared that he believed, after all, Major Sedley was the only man of the whole party who did not wish to take away his life, and that he would stay no longer with them; and, running forward to where he had fastened his horse, mounted him, and was out of sight in a moment; Mr. French and Charles forbearing to follow him, as they could not hope to derive any farther entertainment from his fears or his folly.

Major Sedley, disconcerted by Mr. French's inuendoes of how formidable a rival he had proved to poor Lennon, immediately mounted his horse, and was wishing Charles good morning; when Charles, pressing the whole party to

return with him to breakfast, they consented; but the Major riding very fast, to avoid any farther discussion of the subject, they soon reached the house.

On their going into the breakfast-room, Mrs. Montague asked Charles where he had been, saying she had been rather uneasy at his long absence, from observing how much he had appeared occupied on the preceding day, and learning that he had forbidden his servant to attend him.

"I could not allow Kennedy to attend me," cried he, "as I was engaged as second in a duel, and you know these kind of affairs are never made public till after they are over."

"Second in a duel!" exclaimed Mr. Montague, much surprised; "pray between whom?"

"It is a long story, sir," said Charles, "but the principals were Sedley and Lennon, and the seconds Elmore and myself."

"Is it possible, Major Sedley," exclaimed Mr. Montague, "that you can have fought with such a man as Lennon?"

"Indeed I have not, sir," replied he; "nor

could, for a moment, have intended it; but you must allow Montague a little latitude."

"Very well," cried Charles; "now let me tell *my* story."

He then gave a most ridiculous recital of the morning's transactions, painting Lennon's boasting vaunts and subsequent terrors in such an amusing light; acknowledging that he had spirited him up to send the challenge to Sedley by representing him as his rival; and mingling truth and exaggeration in such a way for the purpose of exciting a laugh, that it was impossible to ascertain what part any person concerned had acted, except Lennon, whose conduct, as it really occurred, was amply sufficient for that purpose.

This recital answered the end for which it was intended, of raising reiterated bursts of laughter, in which even Mr. Montague could not forbear joining, though seriously displeased with his son for having used Sidney's name in the affair; and the moment he could make his voice heard, he rather warmly reproved him for his levity in this

particular, declaring Lennon should never again enter his house.

"Come, my dear sir," cried Charles, "don't be angry in downright earnest for a mere joke. Lennon, I'll answer for it, will never trust himself again in my vicinity; and you surely cannot think that any person will be fool enough to believe a word he says; even if it were possible that, after what has passed, he should ever mention a syllable of the affair."

Then, anxious to obliterate the whole circumstance from his father's mind, he ran on in a strain of frolic and gaiety which insensibly restored Mr. Montague to his wonted good humour, as he always felt the utmost pleasure in his son's lively animation.

Sidney's confusion during Charles's narrative of the morning's transaction was unspeakable, from his open avowal of having spoken of Major Sedley as Lennon's rival. Unable to leave her seat without betraying a degree of consciousness she could not endure to have it suspected she felt, it was with some difficulty she preserved sufficient composure to escape general observation, as she frequently

perceived Mr. French give the Major a look of such arch congratulation as tended still farther to increase her perturbation; and seizing the first opportunity of making her retreat, without seeming particularly to desire it, she retired to her room.

Surprised and offended that Sedley should, from any motive, or from any persuasion, have engaged in what she considered an unfeeling piece of mischief, his avowed resolution of not intending Lennon any personal injury formed no excuse for conduct she thought so unworthy of the sentiments he had on all occasions expressed, and so contrary to the manner in which he had before acted. Much as her sensitive mind was wounded at believing that she had far overrated Sedley's merit in thinking him superior to the common follies of young men; and that his total freedom from levity and thoughtlessness rendered this a peculiar stain to his character, it was far from being her only subject of regret and disappointment; her feelings were much more severely wounded by the reflection that she must have widely erred, in supposing he

viewed her with sentiments of partiality, when he had, without evincing any displeasure, allowed his companions to use her name in a manner that convinced her of his indifference to her feelings; this too fully assured her that, had his been similar, he could not have borne what must then have been such galling raillery without shewing a degree of resentment that would soon have compelled them to silence. With all the fervour of newly-excited anger and mortification, she determined to be more cautious in future of trusting to the mere effusions of common good nature, and carefully to guard her peace from falling the victim of too warm feelings, and thus becoming an object of the ridicule, which Mr. French's intelligent looks at the Major taught her to apprehend she might have even already incurred.

On joining the family in the drawing-room, as usual, she was compelled to listen to Fanny's animadversions on the subject, who had formed precisely the same opinion of the Major's conduct she had herself; and who, with evident triumph, declared it was pretty obvious that Major Sedley was not very deeply in love, as

the insult to himself was all he had thought it necessary to resent; indeed it was very palpable that he would allow the ladies to take what care they could of their own dignity; she concluded by a reflection which seemed to afford her infinite satisfaction, that she did not really believe the Major had any heart to lose; but would, like most other men of his profession, amuse the passing hour with any doll who came in his way, and most probably laugh heartily at their folly in believing him so easily caught.

Sidney, whose feelings were in too perturbed a state not very keenly to feel Fanny's ill-nature, was unable to command her usual temper; and, pleading that she had letters to write, again retired to her room, where, absorbed in a train of the most mortifying reflections, she forgot to mark the progress of time till a summons to dinner roused her from her reverie. Hastily adjusting her dress, she proceeded to the dining-room, where she found the family already assembled, together with Major Sedley, Captain Elmore, Mr. French, and some other young men who had spent the day out shooting with Charles. They

all seemed in high spirits; and Sidney observed, with mingled anger and mortification, that the Major appeared even unusually gay and animated.

None of the gentlemen retired to the drawing-room till tea was ready; and, as soon as it was over, Charles proposed their all going to play billiards in an adjoining room. One of the gentlemen asking Fanny if she would not feel some amusement in looking on, she replied in the affirmative; and, taking Sidney's arm, without even a thought of inquiring whether she chose to be of the party, proceeded to the room, followed by Anna, ever eager in the search of pleasure. Sidney even felt gratified by a proposal that would give some other employment to Fanny than watching her looks, and making the most ill-natured comments on them.

Immediately on their entrance, Fanny was joined by Mr. French, who, uniting a large share of military sauciness, and the affected airs of a young man of fashion, to his natural levity and gaiety, had rendered himself so peculiarly agreeable to Fanny, as to induce her

to receive his homage with unusual complacency, even after she was convinced how futile was the attempt of endeavouring to pique Major Sedley by shewing distinction to him; and, though she internally laughed at the idea of bestowing herself and fortune on a younger brother and a subaltern officer, she was perfectly content to admit him to the honour of standing foremost on the list of her admirers.

As Charles was one of the players, Anna, eager for his success, and anxious to display even more interest than she really felt, stationed herself as near him as she could, making inquiries from the surrounding gentlemen of the probable issue of the game; while Sidney, whose spirits were too much depressed to feel any anxiety on the subject, after a few languid questions, took up a book she found lying on a window, and, seating herself as far as possible from the table, began to read.

She had not been long thus engaged when Major Sedley approached, and, taking a seat beside her, attempted to enter into conversation; but not yet sufficiently versed in

the world to have acquired the necessary art of disguising her feelings, her manner, however polite, was too obviously changed to escape the Major's observation; who, after a few moments painful and embarrassed silence, said, " Few circumstances, I believe, are more painful to a mind endued with any share of sensibility, than the consciousness of having offended or fallen in the estimation of those on whose good opinion we place the highest value. Will you then generously allow me to inquire how I have incurred a degree of displeasure which your native candour renders you so inadequate to disguise ?"

Excessively confounded at having so palpably betrayed feelings that she was anxious to conceal, and aware of the necessity and propriety of endeavouring to account for them, Sidney was for some time unable to reply; when at length, forcing a smile, she said she was sorry if she had appeared capricious or unreasonable, but the sensation she felt at having her name so publicly coupled with Mr. Lennon's, and the consequent ridicule, if not contempt, to which it had exposed her, had, she

feared, equally affected her spirits and her temper, and might therefore have rendered her manner unintentionally reserved.

"And do you suspect me," cried he, "of having wilfully entered into such a scheme of using your name in any manner unworthy the respect to which your are entitled?"

"I cannot say," replied Sidney, rather coldly, "that I have made any very accurate distinctions, as Charles was the only person with whom I had any right to feel offended, and, with him, remonstrance or accusation are equally superfluous:—I have perhaps little reason to regret a circumstance, that, however disagreeable at the moment, has saved me from any future uneasiness, by withdrawing the veil which Charles so artfully threw over his introduction of Mr. Lennon, and thus inducing my uncle to interpose his authority.'

"Whatever indifference you feel with respect to my conduct and actions," cried Major Sedley, with recovered dignity, "you will, I hope, permit me to vindicate both from a degree of impropriety, very foreign indeed to my character and feelings."

Sidney, surprised, made no effort to reply, and after a moment's pause he continued: "The account Montague gave of this morning's transaction, I must, in justice to myself declare, was in many respects gross exaggeration, and given with no other intention than to excite a laugh. He asserted that I met Mr. Lennon for the purpose of endeavouring either to force or frighten him into a mock duel; but I assure you I neither did take, or had any intention of taking, a pistol loaded even with powder into my hand; I met him with no other view than that of reproving him for a very impertinent letter he addressed to me, and warning him against a repetition of similar conduct in future; if I consented to have our interview take place, in the woods of this demesne, it was merely to get rid of Montague's and French's joint persecutions; when pitying Lennon, on perceiving from his conduct how completely he was the dupe of Montague's raillery, I contented myself with simply offering him my advice to refrain from similar impertinence; and though I could not forbear laughing at a degree of folly and absurdity such as I had never before

witnessed, I in no other way joined in any species of ridicule. Any attempt to have restrained either Montague or French, you will do me the justice to allow, would have been vain, without engaging in a serious quarrel that my friendship for both made me desirous to avoid. I shall no farther trespass on your time than to request you will have the goodness to ask Montague if the account I have just given you is not strictly correct."

"No, Major Sedley," cried Sidney, somewhat confounded, "I need not make such an application, for I cannot for a moment doubt the truth of your assertions. I may have appeared to take unnecessary offence, from not keeping my feelings under proper control; but I assure you I am perfectly sensible that I have no right to feel displeased with any person except Charles; and his thoughtlessness, which has placed me in a very disagreeable situation, will, I hope, plead my apology for any thing that may have appeared offensive in my manner."

"I am sorry to perceive," replied he, "that you allow this foolish affair to give you so

much uneasiness. Montague's character is too well known for any person, except such a fool as Lennon, to become the dupe of a dangerous species of vivacity, which he has no other design than to promote mirth; and however ready French, or perhaps even Elmore, might be to second his frolics, neither have, I firmly believe, ever formed or uttered a thought which could give you pain. Thus much I am bound in justice to them to say, as Montague as little scrupled using their names as he did mine: and I will now confess to you, that had it not been from a desire of ridding you of Lennon's persecutions, which I could not prevail on Montague to do, and knew not how in any other way to attempt, I would have taken very different notice of Lennon's letter, as neither it nor his conduct entitles him to any consideration."

"I see," cried Sidney, blushing deeply, "that you are determined to convince me of my folly and injustice; but of both, believe me, I am now sincerely ashamed."

"No, no," exclaimed Major Sedley, eagerly; "all I wished was to convince you

that I had not acted with a degree of levity, which scarcely pardonable in Montague, would in me have been inexcusable. I do not intend this as any invidious distinction; Montague, peculiarly blessed in every circumstance of life, and endowed by nature with a very unusual flow of spirits, can scarcely at any time restrain them from running into the wildest exuberance; my fate," continued he, sighing, "has not been quite so fortunate, and many circumstances have concurred to incline me to more serious reflection than is perhaps perfectly consonant to my years and profession."

Thrown off her guard by this speech, as she had never before heard Major Sedley make the most distant allusion to his private situation, Sidney involuntarily raised her eyes, and looked at him for a moment with inquiring earnestness; when, struck with surprise at observing the melancholy expression of his countenance, she hastily withdrew her attention, and saying in a hurried manner that she was satisfied of the truth of his statement, proposed going to the table to look at the game, which the general exclamations of the party proclaimed had

arrived at an interesting crisis. The Major, concluding that she felt ashamed of having attached so much importance to what he represented as so trifling, followed without uttering a word, and did not again make the most distant allusion to the subject.

Though this conversation served to convince Sidney that she had formed no erroneous opinion of Major Sedley, in believing his feelings and principles were not of the common stamp, it left a disagreeable impression on her mind, from giving rise to a suspicion that the circumstance of his life, which he seemed so much to deplore, was a disappointment in his affections, which, though it had not altered the general tenour of his disposition, had yet rendered him insensible, if not averse, to any second attachment. This suspicion a recollection of the confusion Miss Dalton's remarks had excited served to confirm. Distressed at having suffered her feelings to become so easily the sport of her imagination, she resolved to keep a more cautious guard in future; and assiduously to endeavour to treat and consider Major Sedley as a friend, who,

however pleasing and agreeable, could never be any thing more to her: though she determined cautiously to avoid any change in her manner that could give rise to a suspicion of her disappointment.

CHAP. XII.

As young Montague had invited a party of his college friends to spend some time with him at Belle Vue, preparations were making for their reception; and the whole family anticipated much pleasure from the amusements, of which their society would naturally be productive. Sidney also rejoiced at their promised visit, as so many strangers would, she hoped, assist in amusing her mind, and enabling her to play the part she had determined to act with propriety.

On their arrival, Belle Vue became a scene of uninterrupted gaiety, as Mr. and Mrs. Montague, equally anxious to gratify their son, crowded their house with a constant succession of company, to render it agreeable to his guests. Charles, acting in capacity of master of the revels, shone forth the very soul of mirth and frolic, though much disappointed

by the absence of a Mr. Savage, who, one of the gentlemen told him, had been suddenly summoned to England to attend his father, who, it was feared, would scarcely survive the meeting.

At this period the Colonel of the dragoons quartered at C—— joined his regiment; and his presence relieving Major Sedley from the duties of a commanding officer, he and Captain Elmore were more constant visitors than ever at Belle Vue, Charles never willingly permitting them to be a day absent.

Colonel Coote also became a frequent visitor, and proved a very pleasing addition to their society; he united gentlemanlike manners to a large portion of general information, acquired in various countries in which he had at different times served with his regiment, as he was long past the meridian of life.

Sidney at first felt sorry at being thus obliged to spend so much more of her time, than she had yet passed, in Major Sedley's society, as, she began to fear, he might prove an acquaintance dangerous to her peace. Un-

affectedly delicate and prudent, her regret, though confined to her own bosom, was genuine and sincere; but, she was unable to act with the reserve she had meditated, without laying herself open to inquiries, that would have been impossible to answer; and, observing his manner become every day more pointedly attentive, without however evincing aught that could strengthen the suspicion she had indulged of a prior attachment, she dismissed it wholly from her mind, and enjoyed with animated pleasure the amusements now so amply afforded her. Relieved from the persecutions of Miss Watkins and Fanny, whose thoughts were too much occupied to attend to her, the only circumstance which gave her even a moment's concern was a wish to escape from Mr. Dawson, who, having become her professed admirer, teased her by his turbulent gallantry and constant attendance; he deeply wounded her pride by the undisguised consciousness of the compliment he thought his attention paid to one whose fortune was so much embarrassed. He even frequently hinted that she ought to take more pains to secure so advantageous a

conquest; and as he joined great brutality to great freedom of manner, she equally feared and disliked him.

About a fortnight after the arrival of the young men, a large party dined at Belle Vue; and on the gentlemen coming into the drawing-room, Fanny proposed their going to the ball-room.

Immediately on their entrance, Major Sedley asked Sidney to dance, who had scarcely time to answer in the affirmative, when Colonel Coote, taking the Major's arm, said he wished to speak to him, and they left the room together.

Mr. Dawson, then approaching Sidney, asked her in his usual unceremonious manner to dance the first set with him: on her replying that she was engaged to Major Sedley, Mr. Dawson, who had on several occasions shewn dissatisfaction at the attention the Major paid her, muttered, in a very audible voice, "Aye, aye! d—n me but you are all alike! I never knew a woman who did not admire a red coat."

"I have always heard that women in that

respect followed the taste of mackarel," cried Miss Dalton; "so, if you choose to be a bait, I would advise you to put on the necessary trappings; and then, I dare say, you will be as glibly swallowed as any other fool."

"Fool," repeated Dawson, angrily; "you will not find me such a fool as to be caught by any bait that you can throw out."

"I shall never take the trouble to throw out a bait to catch a monster," said Miss Dalton, with a look of cold contempt, "however well gilded."

"D—n me," cried Dawson, fiercely, "if there is any thing in nature I hate more than a man in petticoats."

"I hope you don't level your resentment against brutes," cried Miss Dalton, "as that would be a very *unnatural* feeling."

Disgusted by this altercation, Sidney hurried away; and Major Sedley immediately returning to the room, they joined the dancers.

Anxious to get rid of Miss Dalton, whose coarse sarcasms he peculiarly dreaded, though his violence and vulgarity too frequently incurred them, Mr. Dawson strolled to a table

on which refreshments were laid, and, placing his back against it, swallowed bumper after bumper of wine, to drown his indignation.

"Don't you dance, Dawson?" cried Mr. Radcliffe, who had just danced down with Anna.

"No," replied he, in a surly voice; "I don't choose it."

"Why?" asked Mr. Radcliffe; "are you fatigued?"

"I am not," replied he, "but I don't like it." Then, perceiving Sidney and Major Sedley dancing down the middle, continued, "Look there, now; look at that conceited fellow, Sedley; see the airs he assumes. I wonder did he study his steps so well when he was marching knee-deep in mud. He did not look quite so gay and spruce after a battle, when he was the colour of a blackamoor with dirt and gunpowder. I wonder would Miss Montague have admired him so much as she does now, if she had seen him then?"

"I really cannot say," cried Mr. Radcliffe, laughing; "nor did I know she admired him now: but was it because she danced with Sedley that you have declined it?"

"I did not say that," replied Dawson; "but Miss Montague may find herself mistaken: a red coat is a fine thing to look at, but d——d bad to make the pot boil."

Mr. Radcliffe, being called on to dance, made no farther reply, and Mr. Dawson left the place.

Anna, who had observed the anger of his look and manner, asked Mr. Radcliffe what had offended him. Mr. Radcliffe, with much laughter, told her all Dawson had said; which Anna, who had an insatiable love of telling every thing she heard, instantly retailed to Sidney, who was standing next her.

Surprised and offended by this information, she determined not to dance with Mr. Dawson, should he again ask her; but rather to sit still during the remainder of the evening.

Mr. French, learning from Miss Dalton how much Sidney's dancing with Major Sedley had annoyed Mr. Dawson, and hearing from Anna a repetition of all Mr. Radcliffe had told her, determined to ask Sidney for the next set, and also to use his interest to prevent her being disengaged a moment during the re-

mainder of the evening, for the double purpose of teasing Dawson and piqueing Fanny, whose jealousy of Sidney was now so obvious, as to strike the commonest observer; and as Fanny had, since the arrival of new, and, in her opinion, more fashionable, or at least more desirable young men in point of connexion, completely overlooked Mr. French, he felt even childish eagerness to mortify and offend her; and therefore, the moment Sidney was at liberty, he engaged her for the next set.

In a few moments after Mr. Dawson approached, and said, in a sulky manner, he supposed he might now hope for the honour of her hand. Sidney coldly replying she was engaged, he stalked off, muttering loud enough to be heard, "with all my heart."

"There is something strangely rustic about Mr. Dawson," said Mr. Elverton, who was sitting next Sidney: "had I not understood that he was a man of good family and fortune, I should have been strongly inclined to suspect that he was a mere country boor."

Miss Dalton, (whose masculine manners, gigantic size, and avowed hatred and contempt

of men, deterred every gentleman from ever thinking of paying her the usual attention due to her sex, for this reason could find no other entertainment than strolling round the room, venting her sarcasms on all who came in her vicinity,) on hearing Mr. Elverton's remark, exclaimed, " And pray do you think that family or fortune can either make or unmake a boor? or do you flatter yourself that what is called good blood ever made a good man or a good soldier?"

" I should presume," replied Mr. Elverton, disdainfully, " that it is at least a good ingredient, though one that those who are not so fortunate as to possess it always affect to despise."

Miss Dalton, somewhat nettled by this sneer, as her own family had not been very high, replied, contemptuously, " I have always heard that good blood makes good puddings, and therefore I am not surprised that good cooks should be fond of it."

" Your wit is beyond me, I confess," cried Mr. Elverton, affecting not to understand that she alluded to his well-known

epicurism; then, addressing Miss Flowerdale, added, with a soft smile, "Greatly as I have ever admired your feminine delicacy, and the amiable sweetness so beautifully portrayed in every nicely moulded feature, and in the delicate bloom of your countenance, how doubly brilliant do they appear when contrasted with Miss Dalton, whose *tout ensemble à tous égards a tant du sauvage.*"

Though Miss Flowerdale's knowledge of French did not extend so far as to understand even Elverton's trivial remark, she did not betray her ignorance by asking any explanation of his meaning; but, with one of her most languishing smiles, replied, she wondered how any woman could talk and act so like a man; and that, much as she suffered from her extreme timidity, she would infinitely prefer enduring the pain of such feelings, to being at all considered like Miss Dalton, whom no person, she believed, liked.

This reply produced a fresh compliment from Mr. Elverton, who was too anxious to secure the lady and her fortune to heed the ridicule of his companions, who not unfre-

quently rallied him on his unbounded complaisance to all Miss Flowerdale's pretty whims and fears, though they could not forbear acknowledging that he had some penetration in discerning the means of securing a heart which had hitherto resisted all the efforts made to obtain it; for, though its individual value was not estimated at any very high price, the estate to which the disposal of it was annexed was not so lightly regarded.

In pursuance of Mr. French's double plan of mortifying Fanny, and tormenting Mr. Dawson, he not only affected the most extravagant spirits while dancing with Sidney, but, the moment he was at liberty, applied to Captain Elmore to assist him, by engaging her for the ensuing set; though, for this request, he assigned no other reason than Mr. Dawson's anger at her dancing with Major Sedley; and, to oblige him, Captain Elmore readily consented.

Mr. Dawson's wrath at seeing Sidney thus resolutely pursued by a set of men to whom he felt and had, on every occasion where he dared, expressed the most violent antipathy,

was unbounded ; and as he had swallowed too much wine any longer to controul his expressions, and after a torrent of half-articulated invectives against Sidney, and those whom she thought proper, as he believed, to honour with such peculiar distinction, he indignantly left the house; induced to do so by Charles's remonstrances on the impropriety of his behaviour; who, though determined to rally him without mercy at some future period, for the foolish anger he had betrayed, was now heartily glad to get rid of him, from an apprehension of his offering some gross insult to some of the military gentlemen present; and as Charles, with all his spirit, was a young man of strict honour and principle, he was resolved that no guest of his should receive any wanton ill treatment.

Miss Dalton, who had been excessively entertained by Mr. Dawson's wrath and disappointment, on being deprived by his departure of any farther amusement from that source, strolled up to where Sidney was conversing with Captain Elmore, and, accosting her with the same gross familiarity she so gene-

rally practised, exclaimed, "What, my dear, could have induced you so wantonly to throw away your good fortune? A bear, I grant, is no pleasing creature to lead; but a golden bear might prove a valuable animal."

"I have no ambition," cried Sidney, laughing, "to lead a bear of any kind; but will you explain your meaning? for I cannot say I understand you."

"Oh, of course not; it is always proper and necessary for young ladies to affect ignorance and innocence, and all those pretty meek accomplishments."

"To some ladies it might perhaps be a necessary, and even, in some degree, a pleasing sort of affectation," said Captain Elmore, archly; "but Miss Montague has so well succeeded in defining the just limits between ignorance and innocence, and her countenance so happily and so uniformly supports her assertions, that she can never require any other aid to claim implicit confidence."

"Very fine, indeed," said Miss Dalton; "but, without any affected ignorance, may I beg leave to ask, is it in your own name, or

in that of your friend, you make such pretty speeches, as I understood from Dawson that *he* was the hero of the night?"

"What I said, madam," replied Captain Elmore, bowing, "proceeded from my own sentiments; and, though I am sufficiently fortunate to possess many friends, I know not one who would either require or accept such a mark of my friendship."

"So then," cried Miss Dalton, surprised, "Dawson's jealousy has deceived him: and Sedley, after all, is not the man."

Confounded and astonished at Miss Dalton's indelicacy and ill breeding, Sidney blushed deeply, but made no reply; and Captain Elmore, without seeming to notice her confusion, said, with a laugh, "If you mean to say, Miss Dalton, that Sedley is not the man who has particularly offended Mr. Dawson, I believe you are right, as I understand he has waged war against all red coats, without distinction."

"Yes, and as far as I can see, with equal justice," replied she, "as you all appear equally well inclined to rob him of the fair lady of his heart."

" The lady of his heart," said Captain Elmore, " seems so little disposed to accept him as master of her's, that we cannot flatter ourselves with any peculiar degree of favour in being merely exempt from exciting similar sentiments."

" What new era is going to arise in the world," said Miss Dalton, with a contemptuous laugh, " when we find young ladies, who can remain insensible to the charms of a fine house and fine estate; and young men in the army, who pride themselves on modesty, humility, and so forth?"

" The changes every day taking place in the world," cried Captain Elmore, " and the transformations we now so commonly behold, can no longer permit us to wonder at any thing, however extraordinary; not even," added he laughing, " at the novelty of seeing a young lady possessed of taste and feeling; or the still rarer circumstance, of finding officers not quite such puppies as they are usually represented."

Major Sedley at this moment approached and Miss Dalton, addressing him with the most

easy assurance, exclaimed, " I have, to use a phrase of Dawson's, slipped up to my neck in a bog-hole; and as you were the person, Major, who dragged me in, you should kindly extend your hand to pull me out."

" In whatever way I can be so happy as to serve you, command me," cried Major Sedley, politely; " but in what dilemma have I been so unfortunate as to involve you ?"

" I can't say it was exactly you, but a mistake I made concerning you, that led me into error. I understood from Dawson that you were the person who had offended him by dancing with Miss Montague, and therefore I thought myself at liberty to speak with perfect freedom; when, lo! I find Captain Elmore is the gentleman who has been so fortunate as to bear off the fair prize."

" The fair prize, as you are pleased to call me," said Sidney, endeavouring to laugh, though in much confusion at Miss Dalton's gross remarks, " has not, as yet, been carried off by any person; nor, from your own observations of Mr. Dawson, should I have been led to conclude that you deemed it necessary

to have any previous guard, to secure the heart from the power of such an assailant."

"Heart, my dear!" cried Miss Dalton; who ever supposed you could be so silly as to give him your heart, if you have such a thing? Your hand was all I meant; and of that, I must confess, I though he stood a good chance."

"How far it may be proper to avow I have a heart," said Sidney with spirit, "I cannot exactly say; but I will venture to make the confession; and also add the declaration, that, with me, heart and hand shall never be separated."

"I am glad to find," said Miss Dalton, shaking hands with Sidney with masculine roughness, "that you are a girl of such spirit, and I will torment you no farther, as you are really good humoured; but I cannot help pitying that poor brute, Dawson, for his disappointment."

"Such sympathizing compassion," said Major Sedley, smiling, "I should have scarcely expected from Miss Dalton. I thought she held all common feelings in too sovereign contempt to regard them with pity and commiseration."

" What you men term love," said Miss Dalton, " I ever have, and ever shall, hold in sovereign contempt. But when a man sets his heart on having a pretty meek wife to bear with his humours, and cajole him into compliance with her's, and has a good fortune, the stated requisite for the purchase of such a pleasing accommodating help-mate, I must pity a disappointment, which, from being singularly rare, he must consider singularly hard."

" Since you have so openly avowed your sentiments on the subject," said Major Sedley with warmth, " I shall as freely declare mine. The disappointment of any rational plan of happiness, or even of convenience and comfort, consistent with the dictates of honour, I should certainly pity, but this is a world in which we must expect to meet with many severe trials, and can but rarely hope to meet any great share of felicity, that falls to the lot of but a few, a very few peculiarly blessed individuals. For the disappointment of selfish and cold-hearted schemes of avarice and self-gratification, I cannot feel any commiseration, though

I do feel the sincerest pity for the blasted hopes of youthful passions."

"I protest, Major," cried Miss Dalton with a sneer, "I think your best plan would be to throw off the red coat, and put on a black one; you would make an admirable parson."

"If I had thought so," cried he, "I would have chosen the profession; but you, I hope, are not one of those who consider every sentiment of honour and propriety as utterly inconsistent with the character of a soldier."

"No, not absolutely," replied she, laughing; "but I should advise all damsels with tender hearts to beware of listening to fine sentiments uttered by a soldier: from constant practice they can clothe their thoughts like their persons, to the best advantage; and are perfectly adequate to dispose of both to the highest and best bidder. As an illustration of my argument," continued she, glancing her eyes towards Mr. Elverton, "has not that fop played his cards admirably well?"

"I have paid too little attention to his game," said Major Sedley, "to offer any

opinion on the subject; and as I have neither sufficient vanity nor knight-errantry to stand forth as champion for my whole brotherhood, I shall leave it to time and their own conduct either to refute or deserve the stigma you have thrown on them. Despicable men there are in every profession; but I trust I may be allowed to indulge the hope, that no man, who has entered the army for the purpose of serving his country in times of such peculiar necessity, will sully the laurels he has honourably acquired by conduct as remote from true bravery as it is inconsistent with every gentleman-like and honourable feeling."

The general rising of the company to supper put an end to a conversation to which Sidney had listened with equal surprise and confusion, though dreading that any attempt to escape might only subject her to Miss Dalton's gross sneers, whose penetrating observation rendered her an object of universal terror; though the coarseness of her sarcasms, and insatiable love of talking almost hourly exposed her to the severest reprisals, as few, who knew her, hesitated to retort with equal inattention to the

rules of politeness; and, by renouncing the decorum of her sex, she deservedly forfeited her title to claim that protection it would otherwise have afforded her.

CHAP. XIII.

WHETHER in consequence of Montague's threatened raillery, or from pique, Sidney could not determine; but Mr. Dawson carefully abstained from any farther attempts at gallantry; and his manners, when oscasionally obliged to address her, evinced the most surly resentment.

Mr. French's anger towards Fanny prompted him to pay Sidney the most obsequious attention, the observation of which roused Fanny to a high pitch of indignation; and, though present circumstances obliged her to restrain her displeasure, she still found opportunities of venting her feelings in sneers, which unveiled to Sidney the real motives of Mr. French's conduct. Sidney excessively offended at being thus made the tool of his disappointed vanity, behaved to him with a ceremoniousness of politeness that

soon obliged him to direct his attention in a more general manner. Delighted at being thus rid of his and Mr. Dawson's equally disagreeable devoirs, Sidney engaged in the present gaieties of Belle Vue with even additional satisfaction.

Another week had thus elapsed, when a heavy cold confining Sidney to the house, she was one morning sitting alone in the drawing-room, when the door was hastily thrown open by Charles, and, without perceiving she was in the room, he called out, " Come in here, Elmore ; there is not a creature here."

Sidney, who was sitting in a recessed window that concealed her from observation, astonished by Charles's words, instantly arose, and was proceeding forward to undeceive him, when she was deprived of all power of utterance by seeing Major Sedley enter, supported between Charles and Captain Elmore, his countenance deadly pale, and his right arm wrapped up in a handkerchief so steeped in blood, that the drops were slowly falling from it on the floor.

The moment Charles had assisted Captain

Elmore to place Major Sedley on a sofa, he left him to his care, saying he would return when he had sent his servant to C—— for a surgeon. Scarcely had he quitted the room, when the Major, who had not uttered a word since his entrance, leaned his head on Captain Elmore's breast, and fainted.

Captain Elmore, looking round the room, observed Sidney, who still continued as if rooted to the spot, too much shocked and terrified to advance or offer any assistance.

"Will you, my dear Miss Montague," cried he, the moment he observed her, "have the goodness to come here? Sedley has fainted from loss of blood, and I cannot, without your assistance, bind up his arm."

Roused by this call from the state of torpid horror into which the sudden shock had thrown her, Sidney advanced, and, taking a handkerchief that Captain Elmore gave her, bound it as firmly as her trembling hands would permit round Major Sedley's arm; and thus checking the violent effusion of blood, he was soon restored to animation.

On recovering his recollection, Major Sedley

fixed his eyes on Sidney, who was standing next Captain Elmore, endeavouring to give every assistance in her power, though not daring to trust her voice to pronounce a single syllable; and perceiving the terror and emotion painted on her expressive countenance, his own became violently agitated, and without speaking, or seeming able to control the impulse of his feelings, he caught her hand, and pressed it with fervour to his lips.

Sidney's hitherto pale cheeks were instantly suffused with a crimson glow; and though neither willing nor able to speak, she withdrew her hand from Major Sedley, who appeared equally embarrassed by this silent reproof. Captain Elmore, without seeming to observe what had passed, though his countenance had exhibited a momentary expression of surprise, inquired in the most affectionate manner from the Major if the pain of his arm had at all abated.

Major Sedley replying that it had, Captain Elmore apologized to Sidney for their abrupt intrusion, which must have so much shocked and surprised her, declaring his ignorance of her

having been in the room till some moments after he had entered it.

"On such an occasion, sir," said Sidney, vainly endeavouring to speak with calmness, "you surely ought not to have stood on ceremony; but how ——"

She stopped, not daring to pursue the inquiry of how the accident had happened, from the apprehension which had instantly struck her of a quarrel between Major Sedley and Mr. Dawson, whose violent and avowed resentment to the Major rendered the supposition but too probable; and the detail of such a circumstance she felt unable to ask, and could scarcely wish to hear.

Captain Elmore, catching at her meaning, without noticing her so abruptly breaking off her inquiry, replied, that the accident had been occasioned by Major Sedley's having put his gun down a ditch before him, with an intention of leaning on it, to assist him in leaping over, when a sprig unfortunately catching the trigger, it had gone off, and lodged the whole contents in his arm.

He had scarcely ceased speaking when

Charles entered the room, followed by Mrs. Rice; and Sidney, in some measure relieved by the conviction that no quarrel had taken place between Major Sedley and Mr. Dawson, endeavoured to assume more command of her feelings.

Charles, approaching the sofa, told Sedley he had sent off his servant to C—— for Surgeon Crompton. "I waited," continued he, "till I saw him set off, to prevent any possibility of delay; had you not better, therefore, my dear fellow, come up stairs, and lie down till he arrives?"

Major Sedley thanked him, but declined accepting his offer; saying, with a faint smile, it would be inconsistent with the character of a soldier to shew so little fortitude.

Mrs. Rice, advancing with some wine that she had gone to procure him, prevailed on him to take a little, when, feeling revived, and observing Sidney, on whom he frequently fixed an eye of earnest and anxious inquiry, change colour with such rapidity, as indicated the most violent, though repressed emotion, he tried to make light of his sufferings, saying,

that though the walk had overpowered him, he now felt perfectly recovered.

"I request, my dear Otwage," cried Captain Elmore, "that you will not needlessly exert yourself till the surgeon has dressed your arm; our kind friends will wave ceremony till he comes."

"Ceremony!" repeated Charles; "who would stand a moment on ceremony on such an occasion? If I thought Sedley would, I never would forgive him. If he prefers lying here till Crompton comes, to going up stairs, why not do so? but if he does not exactly follow his own inclination, he will only convince me that I have very needlessly endeavoured to acquire his friendship;, and such a conviction I could not readily pardon."

"My dear Montague," cried Major Sedley, affectionately, "I am very sensible of the value of your friendship; and, since to follow my own inclination is the proof you require of my regard, I will do so by lying here till Surgeon Crompton arrives."

Captain Elmore, taking a seat beside Major Sedley, endeavored to keep up a conversation

with Charles, but he was too seriously shocked and alarmed at his friend's situation to be very successful in disguising his fears and feelings.

Charles, satisfied on seeing Major Sedley lie down on the sofa, told Mrs. Rice she had better go and have bandages and every thing properly prepared for the surgeon, and she left the room to obey his instructions.

Charles, whose anxiety and alarm about Major Sedley had too much engrossed his attention to suffer him to bestow any share of it on Sidney, accidentaly casting his eyes on her as she sat, pale, silent, and agitated, as some distance from the sofa on which the Major was lying, approached, and, in a hasty whisper, said, " I am sorry, my dear Sidney, that you have received so sudden a surprise: had I known you were in the room, I would not have come in; but do not, my dear girl, look so petrified; Sedley, I trust, is in no danger; and you know there are some keen and not very good-natured observers who inhabit this house."

Colouring violently, Sidney replied, her

being so suddenly surprised had quite overpowered her.

Charles, without makiug any reply, directed his attention to Major Sedley; and Sidney, shocked and ashamed at having so palpably betrayed her feelings, made a violent effort to restrain them, and carry on some trivial conversation; though, on sometimes catching Sedley's eye fixed on her with a look of agitated anxiety, she could scarcely support even the appearance of composure.

Mr. Montague, whom a confused report of the accident had reached, hurried home, tortured with the apprehension that the person wounded might be his own son. On his arrival at the house his fears were relieved by the servants; and though extremely concerned at hearing how severely Major Sedley had suffered, he could not forbear indulging an emotion of the purest delight at this welcome conviction of the safety of an only and beloved a son.

The pleasure he experienced did not, however, render him insensible to the feelings of kindness and humanity, but rather increased

his anxiety to render Sedley every assistance in his power, from bringing so forcibly home to his own breast the sensations of a parent on such an occasion. Hurrying into the drawing-room, with warm and affectionate kindness he expressed his concern at the unfortunate accident which had occurred : "but why, my dear Sir," continued he, "did you not go to bed the moment you came in ? you would surely feel more at ease than you can possibly do here."

"I pressed him to do so," said Charles, "but he preferred staying here."

Major Sedley thanked Mr. Montague with great and affectionate warmth for his kindness, but declined going up stairs, saying he would prefer attending the surgeon in one of the lower rooms, and that as soon as his arm was dressed he would request Charles's curricle to return to C——.

"How !" exclaimed Mr. Montague, "can you suppose that I would suffer you to leave my house in such a state ? Never could I forgive such inhospitality if shewn to my own son, and never will I practise or permit it : your

father's feelings I can but too well appreciate ; and the same attention that I would wish Charles to receive in a similar situation, I shall feel pleasure in paying you."

Major Sedley's colour rose, and his voice evidently faultered as he endeavoured to express his sense of Mr. Montague's kindness, and his unwillingness to give the trouble his stay must occasion in the present situation of his family, when Captain Elmore, eagerly interrupting him, said, " You must not, my dear Otwage, any farther exert yourself; you are not equal to it at present."

Charles vehemently, and even angrily, declaring that, if Sedley made any farther opposition, he could never again consider him as his friend, and Mr. Montague also expressing some displeasare at his thinking he would permit him to leave his house till perfectly recovered, Major Sedley made a faint effort to express his grateful sense of their offered kindness, when Captain Elmore, again interrupting him, said, with a forced smile, he must positively insist on his silence, as he was too well convinced of Mr. Montague's and his son's friendship to fear

offending them by consulting his friend's present situation in preference to every other consideration.

Major Sedley quite exhausted complied with his desire, and at Mr. Montague's request immediately arose and left the room, supported by Captain Elmore, and attended by Charles and Mr. Montague, anxious to give every assistance in their power.

Sidney from the time of her uncle's entrance had retired to a window, eager to escape his observation, and she now seized this opportunity of retiring to her room, which a dread of still farther exciting attention had hitherto prevented her from attempting. As she was crossing the hall she saw the surgeon hurrying up stairs to Major Sedley's room, and loitering for a moment, to give him time to reach it, she escaped to her own without meeting any farther interruption.

Tormented with the apprehension that Major Sedley's wound must be very seriously dangerous, from the frequent changes of his countenance, and the evident pain he had endured, however anxious to disguise his suffer-

ings; and yet more terrified by the observation of Captain Elmore's fears, who, though he had scarcely uttered a word, and was not a man to be unnecessarily alarmed, had too palpably betrayed by his countenance how severely he was both shocked and affected at the situation of his friend, Sidney vainly endeavoured to tranquillize her feelings, till a recollection of Charles's hint made her almost start with terror at the idea of having so openly betrayed the state of her heart. This determined her to suffer any torture rather than expose herself to contempt and ridicule by any farther confirming the suspicions to which her agitation might have given rise; but which, if she now behaved with firmness, might naturally be imputed to a general feeling of regard, and the terror she must have experienced on so suddenly seeing any fellow-creature enter the room in such a state. Sidney's feelings were very acute, but her fortitude was great, and her understanding not inferior; and conscious that both alike called on her to make the exertion, she at length reasoned and almost compelled herself into a sort of determined calmness of

look and manner. She did not, however, immediately leave the room; though anxious to hear the surgeon's opinion of Sedley's probable danger before she again trusted herself to make her appearance, she hoped that Anna would, on her return from a morning visit, come to seek her, and give the information she desired.

In this expectation she was diappointed, for Anna was much too busily engaged making inquiries, and detailing all she heard to the different young men (whom a confused report of the accident had induced to return to Belle Vue), to remember for a moment that such a person existed.

Unable to endure the suspense she suffered, and dreading that her longer absence from the drawing-room might be remarked, Sidney at length determined to go down stairs, and, if possible, learn from Mrs. Rice (who had gone into the room with Surgeon Crompton) what his opinion was. Before she had reached the first landing-place, she encountered Captain Elmore coming out of Major Sedley's room; when, anxious to hear the surgeon's opinion, and conscious Captain Elmore must naturally

expect such an inquiry, instead of endeavouring to avoid, she approached him; but, struck by the expression of his countenance, on which anxiety and agitation were even more visibly depicted than when he had left the drawing-room, all her newly-acquired fortitude forsook her, and she was unable to pronounce a syllable.

Captain Elmore did not seem to consider any inquiry necessary, as he instantly addressed yer, saying, in a voice of great though melancholy cordiality, "After the kindness and attention my poor friend has this day experienced from every member of this family, I cannot fear, my dear Miss Montague, being thought intrusive by you, in hastening to mention that the surgeon has succeeded in extracting the wadding from his shoulder, where it unfortunately lodged. The pain was indeed excruciating, and such as I could ill endure to see him suffer; but, thank Heaven, it has been effected with safety."

"And what, sir," said Sidney, in a low voice, "is his general opinion of your friend?"

"He has not pronounced any thing posi-

tively decisive; but he entertains some fears from fever, as his arm is lacerated by the shot from his wrist completely up to his shoulder. My own apprehensions of this made me so urgent with Otwage to forbear any exertion, as I know too well he will never yield to pain, or utter a complaint."

Shocked and overpowered by this confirmation of her fears, Sidney was unable to proceed down stairs; snd, saying something that she meant should express her sorrow at so unfavourable a report, in a voice so low that Captain Elmore could not catch a syllable, she hurried back to her room, Captain Elmore passing on without making any attempt to reply.

After a short indulgence of feelings, which she found it impossible wholly to control, a recollection of the insinuations and surmises to which a view of her agitation must give rise, and a remembrance of how imperatively a due regard to her future peace called on her to restrain, and, as far as she could, to disguise her feelings, had the desired effect of enabling her to regain at least outward composure. She then proceeded down stairs, happy at least in

knowing the worst, and thus guarded against the possibility of surprise betraying emotions she was so justly anxious to conceal.

On entering the drawing-room she found the whole family assembled, together with all the young men on a visit at the house, who were expressing their sorrow, and offering their condolements to Captain Elmore, who had come down for the purpose of speaking to the surgeon.

On seeing her enter, Captain Elmore looked at her for a moment; but, on perceiving her colour immediately heighten, he again engaged in conversation with the gentlemen around him, and soon after quitted the room.

Sidney, joining Anna, voluntarily began to speak of Major Sedley, saying how much she had been shocked and alarmed at his unexpected appearance; adding, that the sudden surprise had violently increased the head-ache that she had had since mornining.

" I cannot wonder at that," cried Anna, completely deceived by the still composure of her manner; " you must have been horribly terrified, for Rice told me she never was so

shocked as at seeing the poor Major in such a state. I hope," added she carelessly, "there is no fear of his dying; it would really be very melancholy if he lost his life by so foolish an accident."

Sidney, whose tutored feelings were prepared for such speeches, and whose knowledge of Anna's levity made her place no great reliance on either her hopes or fears, said nothing farther on the subject, but again spoke of her head-ache, saying she feared she had left her room too soon; and, going over to a sofa, sat down, without seeming to pay any farther attention to the conversation universally carried on about Major Sedley, and the various conjectures of his probable danger. As her manner, and her openly speaking of him, had so little tended to awaken suspicion, none was entertained of her real sentiments, or that she felt any thing more than the common and natural concern which such an accident occurring a young man so generally liked and admired must excite; and that she had avowedly declared.

Mr. Dawson, whom curiosity had induced

to accompany Mr. Radcliffe to Belle Vue to learn the particulars of what had occurred, sauntering up to the sofa on which Sidney was sitting, and addressing Mr. Radcliffe, who was conversing with her, remarked, with a sneer, what a d——d awkward fellow Major Sedley must be to have met with such an accident.

"It is not very usual, I believe," replied Mr. Radcliffe, provoked by the evident pleasure Mr. Dawson betrayed, "for men who have served so long abroad as Major Sedley has done to be very awkward in the use of fire-arms, and I am extremely sorry at the unfortunate accident that has occurred."

"What the d——l good will your sorrow do him?" cried Mr. Dawson: "if he loses his arm, he will require something more useful than pity; a good wife to be sure," continued he, looking full at Sidney; "might be servicable, if any woman would be fool enough to be plagued with so troublesome a husband."

"If my pity will do the Major no service, sir," said Mr. Radcliffe, angrily, "neither

will your animadversions do him any injury; and you must excuse me from hearing any further discussion of the subject."

"With all my heart," cried Dawson, angrily stalking away.

"Could you have believed any man capable of uttering such sentiments?" exclaimed Mr. Radcliffe. "Well as I thought I knew Dawson, I did not suspect him to be such a brute."

"He seems to pride himself in being considered such," said Sidney, calmly, whose fortitude and self-command, when time had been given her to call them into exertion, it was not easy to overthrow.

All sort of curiosity being at length satiated, and every thing that could be heard or related on the subject being detailed, Sidney felt as much pleasure as she could experience in having it wholly dropped, and the usual common-place topics of the day discussed.

Mrs. Montague, though feeling little concern for Major Sedley farther than common humanity demanded, as the dislike Fanny had latterly felt towards him for disappointing her

vanity, had been insensibly communicated to her mother, was yet so anxious to gratify her husband and son, who both professed themselves very particularly interested in his fate, that she sent an apology to the company invited to Belle Vue for the day, desirous to have the house kept quiet, and that the Major might receive every degree of care and attention.

The displeasure Fanny felt at this interruption to the general gaiety she neither could nor cared to disguise; but she was surprised beyond measure at Sidney's apparent indifference, which totally deceived her penetration, and deprived her even of the pleasure of soothing her indignation by venting it in sneers, which she concluded would be utterly disregarded. She now settled in her own mind that Charles was indisputably the person to whom Sidney was attached, and that her anxiety to deceive Mr. and Mrs. Montague, joined to a malevolent wish of triumphing over herself, had alone induced her to affect that interest about Major Sedley, which had so wholly duped her; and she determined to use this discovery

on the first occasion that offered of either serving her own purposes or giving vent to her dislike; these mistakes saved Sidney from all the observation and remark she would otherwise have encountered.

The remainder of the day Sidney passed in painful and harassing restraint, though she felt somewhat relieved that Charles and Captain Elmore, by spending the evening wholly in Major Sedley's room, spared her from their observations, which she particularly dreaded; and, pleading a head-ache, she retired early to her room, where she at length indulged, without controul, the feelings which she had so long painfully repressed.

CHAPTER XIV.

About seven o'clock next morning, Sidney was startled from a sleep, which had but little refreshed her, by hearing steps passing hastily along the gallery, in the direction of Major Sedley's room. Terrified at the apprehension that he must be considerably worse, her first impulse was to rise, and, if possible, learn how he had passed the night. It was, however, but the thought of a moment, as, from exposing herself to the suspicions such a step must excite, she instantly recoiled; and, recollecting that Surgeon Crompton had said he would call at a very early hour, she endeavoured to tranquillize herself with the belief that his arrival had occasioned the noise that had so much alarmed her, and determined not to quit her apartment even at the usual hour, not only to avoid giving any suspicion, but to enable her to remain, as long as she could, free from observation.

The anguish she felt at the prospect of Sedley's premature fate brought home with mournful conviction to Sidney's breast how deeply, though imperceptibly, he had gained on her affections, and how weakly she might have injured her happiness without being sensible of her danger; as no direct avowal on his part had authorized her feelings, though every other proof of affeetion he had on several occasions evinced; and never so palpably betrayed his feelings as on the preceding day, when, though oppressed with pain and languor, and restrained by the presence of so many witnesses, no thought had appeared to occupy his mind except a wish to sooth her apprehensions; and the efforts that he had made to repress the emotion, which a sight of her's had occasioned, had evidently injured him. Of this Captain Elmore had betrayed his observation by his anxiety to engross his attention, and hurry him, as fast as possible, from the spot. But this was no moment for Sidney too seriously to weigh the danger she had incurred of wantonly sacrificing her peace at the shrine, perhaps, of cruel and unmanly

vanity; when the object, who called forth those fears and feelings, might, ere many hours elapsed, be consigned to an early grave, equally incapable of injuring or promoting her happiness, except by those sensations his remembrance would inspire.

As the Montague family generally breakfasted between ten and eleven o'clock, and Sidney always quitted her apartment long before that hour, on hearing the clock strike ten, her impatience to learn some intelligence of Sedley conquering her dread of encountering observation, she hastened down stairs.

On going into the breakfast-room, she found Captain Elmore alone, and writing; and was much alarmed at perceiving, by his air and dress, that he had not gone to bed during the night.

On seeing her enter, he arose, and, advancing towards her, inquired, with even affectionate cordiality, if she found her cold better than it had been on the preceding day.

"I am much better, I thank you," replied Sidney, somewhat agitated by his manner; "and your friend is, I hope, not worse;

though I fear, from your appearance, he has but too much required your care through the night."

"I am sorry to say," replied Captain Elmore, "that he is not better; he passed a sleepless and a restless night, and, towards morning, grew very hot and feverish; this, however," continued he, observing her colour change, "must naturally be expected, from the inflammation which a gun-shot wound ever produces, and does not very much alarm me, from having attended him when abroad at a time he was very severely wounded, and we are, therefore, prepared to expect it."

Unable to reply in such a manner as would neither express too much nor too little concern, Sidney remained silent, and Captain Elmore immediately added, "I have but just left him, at his own desire, to write to Colonel Coote, who was not at C—— yesterday when I sent a messenger to inform him of the accident."

"I will intrude on you no longer then," said Sidney, endeavouring, though with difficulty, to speak calmly.

"Your presence can be no restraint on me,"

cried Captain Elmore, "as I have finished my letter, and will only wait to give it to a servant before I return to poor Otwage's room."

Then, going to the table from which he had arisen at her entrance, he sealed his letter, and left the room.

The alarm and uneasiness which this account gave Sidney was much increased by the observation that Captain Elmore evidently wished rather to soften than exaggerate Major Sedley's danger; and had repressed all mention of the apprehensions that his countenance too fully indicated. This observation would, at any other period, have given her very serious uneasiness, from the consciousness it betrayed of how deeply interested in the event he considered her; but as he openly addressed and treated her as Sedley's friend, and seemed to view the whole family as such, she now rather felt grateful for the feeling and delicacy it evinced, than wounded by his manner, which, though it implied the belief, was so remote from designedly conveying that insinuation.

Extremely reluctant to answer any inquiries respecting Major Sedley, or even to hear them

made in her presence, Sidney resolved to go out and walk, forgetting, in her anxiety to escape observation, that she had not left the house for some days; and heedless of any risk she might run of renewing her cold, she purposely delayed returning to the house till she concluded the family must have all assembled, and that every inquiry, either politeness or concern could dictate, must have been heard and answered.

On going in, she found, as she had hoped, the whole party seated round the breakfast-table, except Captain Elmore, who, not wishing to leave his friend, Mrs. Montague had ordered breakfast to be prepared for him in his room.

Immediately on her entrance, Mr. Montague, addressing her with great kindness, inquired how she felt herself, and if her headache was quite gone; then perceiving by her colour that she had been walking, he asked her how she could so incautiously expose herself to fresh cold?

Sidney replied that she was quite well;

and, endeavouring to laugh off her carelessness in going out, took her seat at the table.

On hearing Mr. Montague mention her having been ill on the preceding evening, Charles looked at her for a moment with eager attention, when, perceiving her colour excessively, he immediately withdrew his observation; for, though perfectly indifferent to any confusion, or even displeasure, she might feel at being brought forward as an object of general attention on occasions that, however they might torment, could not very seriously distress her; and though no entreaties could ever induce him to forego any frolic that afforded a prospect of entertainment; yet he possessed too much feeling and generosity to attempt any species of raillery or remark, on a subject in which he thought her heart was interested; especially at a time when she had so much cause for apprehension. Though sorry to learn that she had felt so much as to produce indisposition, he forbore from all remarks on the subject; and determining that no other person should, if he could prevent it, make a similar discovery, he so dexterously shielded her from any kind

of observation, by engaging the attention of the party in general, and avoiding any mention of Sedley, or aught connected with him, that even Sidney herself was deceived into the belief that he considered her wholly uninterested, farther than common-place regard must have affected her; and felt extremely pleased at a conviction that saved her from experiencing the uneasiness which his presence had hitherto excited.

Immediately after breakfast, the young men on a visit at Belle Vue, politely expressing their thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Montague for the amusement and hospitality they had experienced at their house, took their leave; deeming it improper, in the present situation of the family, to prolong their visit.

Very soon after their departure, Colonel Coote, accompanied by Mr. French, who had not been at Belle Vue on the preceding day, arrived; and, as Colonel Coote had been much alarmed by Captain Elmore's letter, they proceeded directly to Major Sedley's apartment.

After sitting with him for a considerable

time, the two gentlemen, accompanied by Mr. Montague and Charles, came into the drawing-room; when Sidney, dreading that any change in her countenance, occasioned by Colonel Coote's remarks, might betray her feelings to Mr. French, from whom she was peculiarly anxious to conceal them, took her place at her work-frame, placed in a remote corner of the room. Scarcely had Colonel Coote taken a seat, when Mrs. Montague introduced the subject by expressing her sorrow at the unfortunate accident that had occurred to Major Sedley, and her hopes of his speedy recovery.

"I hope, indeed," cried Colonel Coote, earnestly, "that his suffering, however severe, may not prove ultimately fatal; it would give me very sincere concern if such an accident deprived our regiment of one of the finest young men I have ever known in it; as, after an intimate acquaintance of several years, I can pronounce Sedley a young man of the greatest worth and nicest principles of integrity and honour."

Sidney's heart almost swelled to bursting at the feelings this speech excited. She could

well have spared an eulogium that sounded in her ears so like the sad tribute paid to departed merit.

"He is a very fine young man, indeed," said Mrs. Montague, with her usual politeness; "but I hope, Colonel, that you entertain no apprehension of a fatal result."

"At present," cried he, "it is impossible to form any opinion, for his being very restless and feverish must naturally be expected; but the surgeon, I understand from Elmore, has expressed great apprehensions of being obliged to amputate the arm; and Elmore has, in consequence, sent off express to Dublin for Surgeon ——, in whose abilities he places implicit confidence."

"If poor Sedley loses his arm," exclaimed Mr. French, "his life will be of little value to him; and of this he is so apprehensive, that I heard him say to Elmore, just before I left him, that if, at his early period of life, he was to become a helpless burden to his friends, he should deeply regret his not having fallen in some of the bloody engagements in which the regiment had been engaged."

"It would be a severe stroke to him, indeed," said Colonel Coote, with some emotion; "particularly after having served with such distinguished gallantry through some very hard campaigns, without receiving any material injury; and, were it not from compassion for his father's feelings, I should almost join in the regret that he had not honourably fallen in the defence of his country."

"It must be impossible, I should think, at present," said Mr. Montague, "to form any decisive opinion as to the probable loss of his arm; and so much must depend on the skill of his surgeon, that I am extremely pleased that Elmore has sent an express to Dublin: his friends, of whom I must confess myself one truly interested, should, in the interim, try to keep up his spirits, and not suffer his thoughts to dwell on so gloomy a subject."

"I did not know till this moment," exclaimed Charles, "that he indulged such an apprehension, as he never hinted at it yesterday evening; for my part, I will do all I can to keep up his spirits."

"Suffer me, however," said Colonel Coote,

with a half smile, " to give you a caution, which even your kindness and friendship cannot render unnecessary; and that is, to beware of inducing Sedley too far to exert himself, as his fever is, even at present, high."

" Your caution, sir," said Charles, good-humouredly, " is only unnecessary from having been forestalled. I certainly cannot boast of being a clever nurse-tender; but Elmore is a perfect proficient in the science, and will not permit any person to move in Sedley's room, except as he directs."

" There has been always an uncommon friendship subsisting between them," said Colonel Coote; " it was really pleasing to observe, while they were abroad, the watchful attention and unremitting care they took of each other in every circumstance in which either required it; and I earnestly hope that poor Elmore may be spared a trial, which, with all the firmness and self-command he possesses, he would find to be very severe."

" Upon my honour I should pity Elmore very sincerely for the loss of such a friend," said Mr. French, " as I remember, when we

were abroad, I often envied him the pains poor Sedley used to take to make him comfortable, while I was obliged to provide for myself in the best manner I could."

"You could not have expected the same attention from him to which Elmore was deservedly entitled," said Colonel Coote; "but he was ever kind and friendly to all his brother officers, and even to his men, on every occasion in which they required his good offices."

Here, to Sidney's infinite relief, a conversation ended that had given her sensations almost too potent for control, by increasing her apprehensions, and confirming her in the suspicion she had formed that Captain Elmore had designedly suppressed to her those fears he had so openly avowed to Colonel Coote; and had not her situation precluded her from observation, no effort of her own could have enabled her to escape detection, as her colour had faded to so perfect a white, that, long after the departure of the two gentlemen, Mr. Montague, on accidentally walking up to the frame at which she was sitting, was startled by her extreme paleness, and earnestly

advised her to take more care of herself, as she was evidently worse from having gone out that morning.

Excessively pleased at his mistake, Sidney laid hold of the opportunity it afforded her of pleading illness as an excuse for the dejection of her spirits and her evident ill looks; and Miss Watkins, morosely remarking that, when young ladies chose to expose themselves to cold after dancing, they must expect to suffer, the remark so completely fixed the opinion in the minds of Mrs. Montague, Fanny, and Anna, before whom it was made, that they never thought of paying her any farther attention than Mrs. Montague's politeness and Anna's good nature dictated, in procuring whatever they judged most useful for her situation.

On the ensuing morning, the surgeon, for whom Captain Elmore had sent express, arrived, but declined giving any opinion, which he said, for some days, it was impossible he could do with propriety; and he advised that a physician should be immediately called in, as it would require the utmost care and attention

to keep the fever under, which was rapidly increasing.

This advice was followed; the best medical aid the country afforded was procured; and every species of care and attention, the Major's situation demanded, was liberally bestowed: Captain Elmore scarcely quitted him even for a moment during the day, and took no other rest at night than by sometimes throwing himself on a sofa bed, which Mrs. Montague had ordered into Major Sedley's room for his accommodation, when perfectly overpowered with sleep and fatigue. Mrs. Rice, (whose heart Major Sedley had won by his affability,) was permitted by Mrs. Montague to dedicate almost her whole time to attend him; frequently sitting up with him at night, to allow Captain Elmore some little time for rest, as on her care and vigilance he placed deserved confidence.

In despite of every attention the Major's fever continued rapidly to increase, and at length rose to such a height as to excite in the minds of all his friends the most serious alarm for his life. Mr. Montague, growing every hour more apprehensive of a fatal conclusion

to his illness, strenuously urged him to send an express to his father, or to any other of his friends he might wish to see, as he should feel extremely unhappy if he did not act with the same freedom as if in his father's house.

This proposal Major Sedley gratefully but absolutely declined, saying his father was at present in England, whither his uncle Sedley had also accompanied him; and the only other friends he would wish to see were his two sisters; but, as Mrs. Ormsby was very near her confinement, he could not think of her undertaking such a journey, nor of depriving her of Miss Sedley's society at such a time; his fate, he said, must now be very soon decided, and he requested that no intelligence respecting him might be sent to his family till they could receive some decisive information.

Mr. Montague, observing Major Sedley much exhausted by having spoken more than he had done for several preceding days, pressed the subject no farther; but, judging of his father's feelings by his own, and conscious how little he could endure to be kept in ignorance on a similar occasion, he determined to

consult Captain Elmore, and therefore sent a message requesting to see him for a few moments in the drawing-room, where he now seldom made his appearance.

Sidney's feelings, from excess of agitation had now sunk into the torpor of despair, and were in no other way obvious than by a death-like paleness, which her friends entirely attributed to indisposision. On hearing Mr. Montague's message to Captain Elmore, she felt a momentary wish of leaving the room; but a hope of learning something on which to found an expectation of the Major's recovery, joined to a desire of judging of Captain Elmore's own opinion of his danger, induced her to stay, though careful to retire as far as possible out of sight.

Mr. Montague's summons Captain Elmore immediately attended, and Sidney felt as if a dagger had passed through her heart on observing the profound dejection of his air and manner, and that he was visibly altered since their last meeting.

" I have sent for you, my dear Elmore," cried Mr. Montague, " to ask your advice

respecting the propriety of sending for some of Sedley's friends, but without his knowledge since he is so averse to it; and also to ask if you do not think it better to inform his father of his present situation; I am very uneasy at his being kept in ignorance, and should feel extremely relieved by having some part of the Sedley family here. They may remain as private as they please, but on the spot I think some of them should be."

"Mr. Sedley," replied Captain Elmore, making a violent struggle to command the feelings this speech excited, "is now at Buxton, very ill with the gout, and General Sedley is also along with him; and to neither does Sedley wish me to write, from a fear of agitating his father in the present state of his health. Mrs. Ormsby and Miss Sedley live at such a distance, that, particularly in Mrs. Ormsby's present situation, to send them any account of his illness would be needlessly harassing them; and since I am with Otwage," continued he, in a voice almost suffocated with emotion, "there is not, I believe, any other friend that he would be particularly desirous of having near him."

" I have been thus urgent," said Mr. Montague, grieved, on seeing him thus affected, that he had spoken to him on the subject, " from a fear you might perhaps stand on needless ceremony; I will not, however, say more, since you think it better to comply with Sedley's wishes of keeping his friends in ignorance of his situation."

" In the present state of his family," replied Captain Elmore, " it is perhaps better to keep them in ignorance; though, had I not given a promise to Otwage to be guided by his wishes, I should certainly have written to his uncle Sedley; but his dislike to give any human being one moment's unnecessary pain has made him thus averse to it; and now," continued he, while his voice faltered, and tears started to his eyes, " it is too late, as the fate of my poor friend must be so soon decided."

Anxious to conceal his feelings, he abruptly quitted the room.

Charles perceiving the impression which his agitation, and his inability to suppress his apprehensions, had made on Sidney, who sat, looking out of a window, the colour of marble,

burst into the most violent abuse of the physicians and surgeons attending Sedley, declaring they magnified his danger for the purpose of raising their reputation by his cure, and wondering that Elmore could be so silly as to credit them a moment; he was himself perfectly convinced Sedley would recover, and, only that he could not bear to tease Elmore in the present state of his mind, he would soon rally him out of his fears.

Though Charles entertained some of the hopes he expressed, from being naturally sanguine, he had by no means such perfect confidence in Sedley's recovery as he expressed, from the generous, though mistaken kindness of soothing Sidney's fears; and in this he succeeded, as she gave involuntary credit to his assertions, from the natural tendency of the human mind to consider the object of its hopes and affections as if exempt from the common lot of mortality, and from the abhorrence the idea of consigning such a being to the grave intuitively inspires.

On perceiving that Sidney appeared soothed

by the confident hopes he expressed of Sedley's recovery, Charles was careful, each time he came from his room, to give the most favourable report. As the family had no reason to discredit his assertions, their reliance on his opinion served still farther to revive her hopes; and as she did not again see Captain Elmore, and that the physicians never mentioned Major Sedley's name in her presence, she received no intelligence that could possibly undeceive her.

CHAP. XV.

The hopes Sidney was thus led to encourge, enabled her to preserve her fortitude and apparent composure; and, on the second night after Mr. Montague's conversation with Captain Elmore, she retired to her room in better spirits than she had been in for several preceding days, from having heard Charles, during the evening, express more confident hopes than he had yet done of Sedley's recovery.

She had not been long in her room, when, hearing Mrs. Rice's voice in the gallery, she opened her door to inquire about of the Major, as she had not seen her for some days; but, on perceiving that she was speaking to the physician, she forbore to advance, though a desire of gathering some certain information induced her to linger there, in order to learn his opinion; and, as neither he nor Mrs. Rice observed her, they continued speaking, and,

in a moment after, she heard him say, "You must be prepared for the worst, as I scarcely think he will survive the night."

Overpowered with horror at this sudden and unexpected blight of all her fondly-indulged hopes, scarcely could Sidney totter back to her room; when, throwing herself into a chair, she continued in a state of stupor till aroused by the entrance of one of the maid-servants, who, on observing her nearly insensible, asked if she was ill.

This question reviving her habitual dread of the discovery of her feelings, she replied, in a voice scarcely audible, she felt very faint, and wished to be in bed; and, resisting all the maid's pressing entreaties to allow her to call some of the family, hurried thither; when the woman, leaving the room, returned in a few moments with some hartshorn and water she said Mrs. Rice had given her, who would have come herself to see her, only she could not leave Major Sedley's room.

Sidney took the hartshorn and water, and hastily drank it, to get rid of the servant, who then expressing a hope that she

would find herself better in the morning, left her alone.

For some hours Sidney continued in a state of insensibility, neither perfectly recollecting her situation, nor experiencing any very violent emotion, though mechanically listening to every passing sound; when, in some degree revived by the continued stillness of all aronnd her, which seemed to indicate that the physician's prediction could not have been verified, as it must have occasioned some disturbance, which, from her near vicinity to Major Sedley's room, she must have heard, a sort of faint hope arose, and she continued to listen with agonizing attention, to catch the distant sound of a passing footstep: nothing, however, occurred to interrupt the profound stillness that reigned through the house till nearly eight o'clock, when she distinctly heard the Major's door open, and some person leave the room, who returned in a short time, accompanied by some others; but the distance prevented her catching a word they uttered, though she distinctly heard the murmur of their voices.

Anew struck with horror at what she considered a full confirmation of her worst fears, Sidney again lay perfectly still, feeling no other distinct idea than a wish that she could secure herself from being seen by any human being.

In this state she lay till roused by hearing her door open, when looking forward, and seeing Mrs. Rice advancing, she pressed her hand across her eyes, and prepared in silent anguish to hear at what hour Sedley had breathed his last.

On reaching the bed Mrs. Rice gently drew back the curtain, asking Sidney, in a low voice, if she was awake.

To this question she returned no other answer than removing her hand from her eyes; and Mrs. Rice, unable, from the faint light the open door threw into the room, to discern the expression of her countenance, immediately asked her how she was, hoping that she had passed a good night.

" Very good," replied Sidney in a low voice, " I am perfectly well."

" I am very glad of it indeed, ma'am," said Mrs. Rice, " as I was very uneasy when Mary

told me last night you were so ill; and only I could not leave Major Sedley at the time, I would have come to see you; but, as he is (thank God!) better, I could not go to rest till I came to ask you how you were."

"Better!" repeated Sidney, starting.

"I fear, ma'am, I have disturbed you," said Mrs. Rice, surprised; "you don't seem quite awake."

"Indeed I belive not quite," replied Sidney, recollecting herself, and so overwhelmed with delight at Mrs. Rice's information as to be scarcely articulate.

The uncontrolable emotion with which she pronounced these words confirmed Mrs. Rice in a suspicion she had before formed, that Sidney was not quite so indifferent to Major Sedley's recovery as she was generally considered; and, wisely judging that the truest kindness she could shew her would be to sooth her fears, without appearing to notice her agitation, she continued, "I am sorry, ma'am, I disturbed you; but I was afraid you would think it was from want of proper respect and attention I did not come in last night; but it

was entirely out of my power, Major Sedley was so very ill; but as he has now passed the crisis of his fever, he will soon, I hope, be quite well."

"I hope so, indeed," said Sidney, more calmly; "I should have been very sorry if you had thought of leaving him: when did he begin to amend?"

To this question Mrs. Rice did not directly reply, but, taking a seat beside the bed, began the following narration: "About ten o'clock last night, ma'am, doctor Powel called me out of Major Sedley's room, and told me he did not think he could pass the night, as nothing we could do would put him to sleep, and he wished to put me on my guard not to alarm the family. I was very sorry to hear the doctor say this, for a sweeter, finer gentleman I never saw than the Major; but, still hoping the best, I went back to his room: he was then raving greatly, and insisting on Captain Elmore's giving him pen and ink, as he said he wished to write to his father. Captain Elmore, finding it useless to refuse, at last brought them to his bed: he then seemed to remember that he could make

make no use of his arm, for he suddenly said, "I can't write; but Henry,—you will see my father,—you know all my wishes,—and I scarcely recollect now what I intended to say."

Captain Elmore promised he would do as he desired, and the Major after lying still for a few moments, again called Captain Elmore, and said he knew he was dying, that there was one person he wished to see, and asked Captain Elmore if he would bring her. I could not hear who it was he wanted to see, but I am sure it was some young lady he has a regard for, from the few words I heard him say: but, though Captain Elmore was in such grief he could hardly speak, he begged of him to lie quiet, and to try and compose himself, for, though he would do any thing in the world to oblige him, he could not comply with that request. The Major at first was angry, and raved worse than before; and then Captain Elmore begged of him to remember what he was saying, and where he was, and to take the drops the doctor ordered for him; and asked him if he knew him.

On hearing Captain Elmore say this, I brought the drops to the bed-side; and the Major, looking very earnestly in Captain Elmore's face, said, "I do know you, my dear Henry, and will do as you desire me; but I feel that it will soon be all over." He then took Captain Elmore's hand, and pressing it, said, "We must part, my dear Henry; but may God bless you and reward you for all the tenderness you have now shewn me—indeed your kindness and friendship have been the chief blessings of my life." In spite of all poor Captain Elmore could do, tears ran down his cheeks on hearing Major Sedley say this; but he did not speak, and only squeezed his hand between both of his.

As I was standing close to the bed with the candle at the time, Major Sedley immediately took notice of Captain Elmore's grief, and it disturbed him greatly: he was quite silent for a minute or two, and then he pressed Captain Elmore's hand to his breast, and said, "We have both obeyed my mother's last injunctions, dear Henry, and I die content: but leave me now, I am quite exhausted; once

more and for ever farewell, and may the Almighty bless and render you as happy as you deserve !"

Poor Captain Elmore could not speak, but he immediately turned from the bed, and went over to the chimney-piece, and leaned his arms on it, and held his face between them. Oh ma'am, when I saw the grief he was in, I could not help crying bitterly; and at last I went up to him, and asked him if he would take a glass of wine and water, and lie down on the bed, as the Major was more quiet: he did not speak, but beckoned with his hand that he would not have any, and then went over and threw himself on the sofa; but, in spite of all the pains he took not to let me see him, I saw his face was quite wet with tears, and he continued to choke and sob for a long time after he lay down, though I did not seem to take any further notice, for I know young gentlemen do not like to have their grief observed, though I am sure I thought a thousand times better of him, for being so affectionate a friend.

The Major lay perfectly quiet, which he had never done for so long before; and, after

waiting for some time, I stole softly over to the bed and looked in, and saw he was asleep; and my heart beat with joy when I saw this, as I knew then he had a good chance, and that it was the crisis coming on that had made him so ill; so I went over to Captain Elmore and whispered to him, to let him know it: but he mistook what I said; and starting up, with a face the colour of death, he said, "Great God! is he gone?"

I was greatly frightened for fear he should waken Major Sedley, but at last I made him sensible he had only gone to sleep. On hearing the good news he clasped his hands, and saying, "Heaven be praised, he has now some chance!" he got up and stole over to the bed, and sat watching him for a long time; when, seeing him sleep quietly, which he did not do at first, he grew satisfied, and consented to lie down on the bed, after repeatedly thanking me for all the kindness I had shewn to his friend, he declared that he never could forget it, and should rejoice at any opportunity of shewing how much he felt obliged to me.

Major Sedley slept without once wakening

till near eight o'clock, when he called for some drink, and Captain Elmore, instantly going over to his bed-side, asked how he was. The Major smiled when he saw him, and said he was so much better, that he thought he had now a chance of recovery.

Poor Captain Elmore was in such joy at hearing him say this, that hecould hardly speak, but went directly for the doctor and the surgeon, and they both said the fever had taken a very favourable turn, but desired, on no account, that he should be disturbed, or suffered to speak; and, as he fell asleep again very soon after, I left him to the care of the house-maid, and came to see you, ma'am."

The emotion Sidney experienced while listening to this long narrative was too powerful to allow her either to interrupt or consider it tedious; and, after thanking Mrs. Rice for her attention to herself, expressed, in guarded terms, her pleasure at the favourable change Major Sedley's illness had taken.

"Every person who knows him, ma'am," said Mrs. Rice warmly, "must be glad of his recovery; for I never saw a better-hearted or

a more real gentleman, never giving any trouble he could help; and always so kind and sweet tempered, even when he was so ill that he could scarce speak; and I am sure he was as much obliged to me, and as careful not to give me trouble, as if I had been the first lady in the land; and there are many gentlemen, not half so high in the world as he is, would take all that could be done for them as only their right; but if it was no more than the regard that Captain Elmore has for him, it would shew what he is; for he seems to have a greater friendship for him than I ever saw any gentleman before have for their own brother; but, as I always said, a good heart is better to one than blood, be it ever so near."

Then, saying she was very much fatigued by having sat up all night, she left the room, and retired to bed.

When left at liberty to indulge her feelings without restraint, Sidney felt inexpressible relief by giving vent to them in tears, and continued to weep, until at length, perfectly exhausted, she sank to sleep.

On awakening, she perceived Anna sitting

reading in the room, who told her that, as the maid had informed her she had been very ill on the preceding night, she had come to sit with her, as her father and Charles had expressly desired she should not be disturbed, or suffered to rise; and concluded by asking how she felt herself.

Sidney, thanking her for her kindness, replied she felt infinitely better, and would prefer getting up.

"You must not think of stirring till you have breakfasted," said Anna, ringing the bell; then added very archly, "Your feelings and Major Sedley's appear wonderfully sympathetic, as he has been, I believe, pronounced nearly out of danger to-day, and is certainly infinitely better than he was last night."

"I am very much pleased to hear it," said Sidney, colouring deeply.

"That I can readily credit," cried Anna, laughing; "but I had no idea you could play your part so well."

"What do you mean?" said Sidney, alarmed; "what part have I played?"

"I had always a suspicion that you had a

penchant for the handsome Major," said Anna, "till you deceived me by appearing to feel so little (at least so little more than a friend) about him the day he was wounded. To deal candidly with you, had it not been for Charles, I never should have discovered my mistake; but last night, after you left the drawing-room, he asked me to follow him into the library and there told me the physicians had given it as their opinion the Major could not survive the night, nor did he himself entertain a hope of his recovery, as he had requested Charles a few days before to draw up a will for him, which Colonel Coote and Mr. French had witnessed, purposely sending Captain Elmore out of the way, as the Major was averse to have him know any thing of the matter. "It is all over, therefore," continued Charles, "with poor Sedley; and, as I have some reason to suspect there was a mutual attachment between him and Sidney, of which several circumstances I cannot now mention, have convinced me, I have been hitherto anxious to deceive her as to his danger that she might escape Miss Watkins' and Fanny's sneers. It is vain, how-

ever, to attempt deception any longer, as I have no hope poor Sedley will ever see the morning; and remember, I charge you, Anna, as you wish to oblige me, that you will, without speaking of what I have just told you, take care of Sidney, and persuade her to stay in her room till she recovers from the shock,—we can tell my father, and the whole family, it is mere illness that confines her to her room, and Sidney will gladly avail herself of the excuse."

"I was excessively surprised," continued Anna, "to hear Charles speak in this manner, but promised to do as he desired; it was, however, extremely pleasing to be spared from so disagreeable a proof of my friendship, for I was scarcely awake this morning when Charles tapped at my door, and, hastily saying Sedley was out of danger, ran off; but, on hearing you were so ill last night, he desired me to come and sit here, and save you from being unnecessarily surprised. Rice, however, told me she had come to see you very early, and that she had told you all the news; but on seeing you look so pale, I determined to remain with you till you awoke. Do not, however,

say any thing of what I have just mentioned to Charles, as I know he would be displeased with me for speaking of it; and now hush! for here is Mary with your breakfast."

Sidney was too much mortified and confounded at this convincing proof of how perfectly Charles had understood her feelings to be at first sensible of the gratitude due to his delicacy and tenderness, and, unable to disavow what she knew to be truth, she continued silent and abashed.

Anna, without appearing to notice her silence, conversed on indifferent topics till the servant took away the breakfast things and left the room, when, taking her hand, she said, affectionately, "There is no need, my dear Sidney, for seeming so confounded at what I have told you: you cannot fear *my* ill-nature, however reasonably you might dread Fanny's; and, had not Charles known he was safe in trusting me, he never would have spoken on the subject, as he bears you a very sincere and tender affection. As you could not, you see, deceive him, you are not worse off than if he had never said a word of the matter; nor,

after all, do I see any thing so very shocking, or that should mortify you so much, in being suspected of feeling a little tenderness for a man that Charles told me has long extravagantly admired you, and who never appears happy out of your society. Though I must confess I was too much occupied in amusing myself to be so very accurate an observer, yet I certainly did suspect there was a *tendre* between you, till you yourself deceived me."

Sidney, somewhat calmed by this speech, and finding any farther disguise of her sentiments impossible, frankly avowed her partiality for Major Sedley, which she said his own conduct and manner had authorized, though he had never explicitly declared his feelings.

"This candour seems infinitely more natural to you," said Anna, laughing, "than the queer kind of chilling stupor you have latterly assumed to deceive the curious; though I must say you were perfectly right to be on your guard against some of the good folks of this house; however, I think you need not have been quite so reserved with me. But it is

no matter; I will only treat you in the same way To be serious, as far as I can judge of Major Sedley's character, you have no reason to be surprised at his not having yet declared himself in form. He is just the kind of man I never should suspect of falling systematically in love, but one who would refine, and refine on, till some unexpected accident broke the spell; and if I do not greatly mistake, and can place any dependence on the opinions I have heard him avow, I should fancy he would endeavour to be tolerably sure of his fair mistress's heart before he hazarded a declaration, as I think him infinitely too proud to run any chance of a refusal."

Sidney, soothed and gratified by the perfect conviction Anna had expressed of her influence over Sedley's heart, and relieved from all the fears that had so long oppressed her, continued to converse with her for some time longer. At length feeling infinitely better than she had been for some days, she dressed, and accompanied her down stairs.

On going into the hall they saw Captain Elmore, who was giving his servant a message

to Colonel Coote. The moment he perceived them he came forward, and, with a countenance very unlike that with which he had last addressed Sidney, expressed his pleasure at seeing her so much recovered, as he had been very sorry to hear from Charles that she had been seriously indisposed by a cold. Sidney thanked him, and with some confusion, added her congratulations on the favourable change that had taken place in Major Sedley's illness.

"He has, thank heaven," cried Captain Elmore, while his eyes sparkled with delight, "had a most favourable change; and as he still continues in a tranquil sleep, the physicians declare that all danger is nearly over; and the surgeons think the wound to-day has so good an appearance, that my apprehensions of his losing his arm are in a great measure removed."

"I am quite delighted to hear it," exclaimed Anna, frankly expressing the pleasure which Sidney silently felt; "and I am sure Major Sedley is happy in having such a friend. Had he been your brother, you could not have paid

him more attention; and I do not believe there are many brothers who would have shewn him half so much."

"To deal candidly with you," said Captain Elmore, "I have not a brother for whom I feel half the affection I do for Otwage. He and I, in childhood, selected each other from all the rest of our companions; and I may truly say that our affection has "grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength." Otwage never had a brother; and as his poor mother was particularly anxious to gratify all his wishes, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, my father permitted me to reside entirely at Sedley-Park, where we were educated by the same tutor. But no attention of mine can possibly repay the generous affection he has ever manifested for me; never did I, on any occasion of my life, require his friendship, his interest, or his services, that they have not been lavishly exerted in my favour."

"Well, well," cried Anna, "all I can say is, that you have each made a better choice of a friend than the generality of people do."

Captain Elmore smiled; but, checking the feelings that had involuntarily overflowed, made no reply, and hastened back to Major Sedley's apartment.

On her first meeting with Charles, Sidney felt a painful degree of embarrassment; but, without making the slightest allusion to Sedley, he so affectionately congratulated her on her amended looks, and his manner was so perfectly free from any thing bordering on raillery, that she soon recovered her wonted tranquillity.

CHAP. XVI.

MAJOR Sedley continued so rapidly to recover, that, in a few days he was enabled to sit up in his room, and to receive the visits of Mr. Enesy and the few particular friends who were anxious to see him, and to offer their congratulations on his unexpected recovery.

Fanny, having grown extremely weary of passing her time in the quiet family circle, though only for the short period that Major Sedley's dissolution had been hourly expected, now persuaded her mother to accept the invitations sent to Belle Vue, and to see her friends as usual; and Mr. Montague not considering any farther caution necessary, the house was again opened for the reception of company; but Charles's good nature prevailing over his love of pleasure, he devoted his evenings chiefly to sitting in the Major's room, whither Mr. Montague often accompanied him.

Extremely weary of his long confinement, on finding his strength, in some degree, restored, Major Sedley prevailed on his physicians to permit him to leave his room; and one morning, while the family were sitting at breakfast, Charles announced his intention of that day coming down to the drawing-room.

"I am really glad to hear it," exclaimed Fanny, "as there are few things I think so disagreeable as having a sick person in a house."

"You did not seem to think so, Fanny," cried Charles contemptuously, "when you were ill yourself; you would then, if I don't strangely forget, remark that nothing annoyed you so much as people who were the picture of rude health."

"I suppose," said Fanny, angrily, "I had a very good right to give trouble in my papa's house; more particularly when I could so well afford to command whatever I required."

"You at least took the privilege," retorted Charles; "but, as money cannot buy health, though it may admiration, I cannot see what connexion it has with the present occa-

sion. It has not been, I believe, from any want of cash the Major has been so long ill."

"I declare, Charles, I don't know what you can mean," said Fanny; "I never saw any person so altered as you are to me latterly; some one must have influenced you to treat me so unkindly; your conduct to every other person, and to Sidney in particular, is very different."

"It only proves," cried Charles, disdainfully, "that the fortune, of which you are so fond of boasting, has no charms for me, since I cannot consider it as an equivalent for good humour and good nature."

"Charles, my dear," said Mr. Montague, warmly, "how can you enter into such petty disputes? Fanny is not wanting in either good temper or good nature, though she cannot bear to be teased; and could not possibly have intended any ill-nature in what she said, as I have always heard her express esteem and regard for Major Sedley."

Charles made no reply, nor did Fanny either, not choosing to give her father any clue

to her altered sentiments with respect to Major Sedley, and provoked that he had taken no notice of her hint of the alteration in Charles's manner, or of her inuendo with regard to Sidney.

To this sort of altercation Sidney was now too well accustomed to pay it any sort of attention, unless when it peculiarly concerned herself; and though startled at Fanny's insinuation, on perceiving it totally unheeded by her uncle, she ceased to think of it.

Agitated at the prospect of seeing Major Sedley, after all that had passed since their last meeting, Sidney would gladly have seized any opportunity of making her escape from the room previous to his entrance; but conscious that she was an object of attention not only to Charles and Anna, but also to Captain Elmore, and, perhaps, even to Major Sedley himself, she determined to call all her resolution to her aid; and to act in such a manner as would convince them all, that if she had, in a moment of terror and surprise, weakly betrayed her feelings, she was yet perfectly aware of the part propriety required her to act.

About two o'clock Major Sedley entered the

drawing-room, accompanied by Charles and Captain Elmore; his right arm was suspended in a sling, and his countenance retained the paleness and languor of illness.

On his entrance Mrs. Montague arose, and, advancing to meet him, expressed her pleasure at his recovery with all that soft and polished good breeding with which she ever veiled her real sentiments, unless when thrown off her guard by sudden and violent emotion.

Her congratulations Major Sedley received with equal grace; and returned his thanks for her kindness and attention with an animation and sincerity in which her manner had been wholly deficient.

Mr. Montague, though not quite so polished in his expressions as his lady, addressed the Major with a warmth and cordiality that spoke at once to his feelings; and Sedley with affecting earnestness, declared that the impression his kindness, and that of his son, had made upon his heart, no time could ever erase; as not under the roof of the best and fondest of fathers, could he have experienced more watchful and tender attention.

"My dear fellow," cried Charles, gaily, "there has been quite enough of all this, so pray sit down and rest yourself."

Miss Watkins and Fanny, with stiff and ceremonious politeness, and Anna with frank and easy cheerfulness, now paid their compliments to the Major, who received those of the two former with good breeding, and those of the latter, with grateful cordiality.

Sidney, feeling herself imperatively called on to avoid particularity, or any seeming want of attention, then advanced, and, with a heightened colour, though with deliberate firmness of manner, congratulated Major Sedley on his recovery.

On seeing her approach, his hitherto pale countenance became instantly animated, and the languor of indisposition, visible in his dark eyes, for a moment gave place to an expression of more than their wonted brilliancy, till, struck by the guarded calmness of her manner, and the total absence of all that could indicate either pleasure or interest in his recovery, dejection and disappointment succeeded; and, with evidently painful perturbation, he replied

with a reserve and formality even greater than that with which she had addressed him.

Sidney, pleased to have the ceremony over, and wounded by Sedley's manners, though conscious her own had not been calculated to excite others, hastily returned to her seat.

A general conversation, which the vivacity of Charles enlivened, now took place, and lasted till Captain Elmore saying he must ride into C—— on business, Mr. Montague and Charles offered to accompany him, and they left the room together.

Very soon after they were gone, Mrs. Montague apologized to Major Sedley for quitting him for a short time, to pay a visit; and desiring that Sidney and Anna would endeavour to entertain him in her absence, she left the room, accompanied by Miss Watkins and Fanny.

Anna's natural levity, unrestrained by their presence, now broke forth with her usual volatility, and she laughed and chatted with careless and unremitting gaiety. To her conversation Major Sedley listened with politeness, though scarcely could he disguise how little entertain-

ment it gave him; and he continued nearly silent, at times apparently buried in deep thought; often casting a look of eager and watchful attention on Sidney, who sat engaged at her work, never making more than a cursory reply to what Anna was saying.

Their mutual silence and embarrassment did not escape Anna's observation, and she at length remarked, with a laugh, she never saw two people whose spirits had been more completely destroyed by illness, "for, rude as it may seem," continued she, "I cannot forbear saying you are both rather stupid companions."

Sidney, though abashed by this observation, endeavoured to laugh; and Major Sedley instantly rising, and advancing to where she was seated, said, with a voice and countenance in which tenderness and resentment were struggling, "how much I am grieved, Miss Montague, to hear that an alteration in your spirits, for which I could not indeed account, has been occasioned by illness; I knew not, till this moment, that you had been indisposed."

"I have not been very ill," said Sidney,

in violent trepidation: "my uncle was a little alarmed at the long continuance of my cold, but that was all."

"If you both take my advice," said Anna, laughing at the confusion she had made each of them feel, "you will blow illness and fears, and the whole melancholy catalogue, to the winds, and not attempt fine speeches in which I cannot flatter you so far as to say you succeed; pray forget all the past, and resume, as fast as you can, your former cheerfulness and good humour."

"If you will only pardon me for my recent stupidity," cried Major Sedley, whose whole manner and countenance underwent an instant change at witnessing Sidney's perturbation and confusion, "I will faithfully promise to be more circumspect in future, and if, at any former period, I have been so fortunate as to please you, no exertion of mine shall now be wanting to secure a continuance of your favour."

"Such a promise," replied Anna gaily, "deserves the pardon you solicit. Now, my fair cousin, what will you say? something, I hope, not less flattering to my vanity."

"I will say," cried Sidney, endeavouring to laugh off her confusion, "that, if you will only cease to torment me, I will be any thing you please."

"If so, then, my dear girl, lay down your work, and come and chat sociably and comfortably, and I will not say another word that can look like raillery."

To this proposal Sidney agreed with the best grace she could; and Major Sedley, who felt evidently obliged to Anna, exerted himself with so much spirit, and seemed to feel such pleasure in the conversation, that her reserve and embarrassment at length wore away, and she insensibly relapsed into her former manner; while Sedley's countenance became animated, and his voice softened into tenderness each time he addressed her; though he cautiously forbore any allusion to his illness, seeming to forget that such a circumstance had ever occurred. Sidney, gratified by his delicacy, and excessively pleased by his manner, quickly resumed her cheerfulness; and Anna took care not to disturb the harmony she had produced by any reference to the past.

Before Mrs. Montague returned, Charles and Captain Elmore came back from C——, and Captain Elmore told the Major that he had received a letter from his uncle Sedley, who had landed in Dublin on the preceding week, accompanied by his father, and had not therefore received the letter he had written, to announce his recovery. "He is very uneasy," continued he, "at your long silence, and desires I may instantly write, and tell him why you have not answered either of his last letters. He expresses himself very much displeased with me for suffering him to remain so long in ignorance of the cause; I will therefore write to-night, and candidly tell him of your strict injunction of silence, as I should be extremely sorry he should think I had wilfully neglected him."

"He will not be displeased," replied the Major, "when he hears that my reason was a wish to spare him unnecessary uneasiness, and to save my father from any agitation, while so dangerously attacked with the gout. Has he mentioned whether my father has derived much benefit from the Buxton air, or what is the present state of his health?"

"He has," replied Captain Elmore; "he says he is perfectly recovered, and as sprightly and good humoured as ever, and assigns a thousand odd reasons for your long silence. They were both to leave town the day after he wrote; and he desires me to direct to Sedley-Park, whither he will accompany your father."

"You are a happy fellow, Sedley," exclaimed Charles, "to have so many people take such interest in your recovery; for, as we were riding into C——, we met a party of the men coming out to see you, having heard from your servant that you were to be down stairs to-day; but Elmore would not suffer them to come on, as he said you were not well enough to be seen: they looked a little glum at the disappointment; but a soldier you know, must obey orders."

"I knew they would be dissatisfied," said Captain Elmore; "but, as I could not trust Sedley's prudence for not standing to talk longer than he ought, I was determined not to tempt him."

"I am not quite so careless as you represent me," replied Major Sedley; "and I should

have been much pleased to have seen the poor fellows, for whose affection and attention to me, on several occasions, I feel very grateful."

"Place all the friendship and attention you meet with to the score of your own merit, as I do," said Charles, gaily, "and then you will get rid of all those ideas of gratitude that I have always heard voted a confounded bore."

"I hope, however, that you would feel gratitude to a fair lady who gave you her heart, Charles,' said Anna, archly.

"I cannot say what I may do till I am tried," replied Charles, "as no fair lady has ever thought proper to pay me such a compliment; and, to tell you the truth, I don't fancy there are many who have any heart to bestow."

"Some, there certainly are, who have not," cried Major Sedley, with involuntary warmth; "but I hope and trust there are many exceptions."

"And with one of those exceptions, I suppose, you flatter yourself you will one day meet."

"I can't exactly say what my hopes are,"

said Major Sedley, colouring; "but, should I be indeed so fortunate as to win a heart deserving of the name, I should deem it an acquisition greater than any other this world could bestow."

"Cælebs in search of a wife will now give place to Sedley in search of a heart," cried Charles, laughing; "so pray, my dear Major, begin immediately; and, if you are as indefatigable in the search as he was, perhaps you may succeed equally well, though I am inclined to think it would be an easier task to find such a systematically trained wife as Lucilla, than a genuine unadulterated heart of Nature's own forming."

"Hopeless as you seem to consider such a search," said Captain Elmore, "I should be sorry to think all my fair countrywomen totally devoid of heart, as I intend, some day or other, to commence the undertaking; and though, as a younger brother, I cannot deem myself entitled to any great share of wealth, I could not possibly dispense with a little affection."

The entrance of Mrs. Montague put an end to a conversation to which Sidney had listened

with uneasiness, dreading that Charles's love of raillery might have led him to make very pointed allusions; but she could not more carefully have avoided any hint of the kind than Charles's own pride induced him to do, as he would have disdained the idea of giving any man reason to suppose he felt the slightest desire for his alliance, no matter how splendid or advantageous.

At Captain Elmore's request, Major Sedley retired early to his room; and such were the good effects of his caution and watchful attention, that in a few days the Major was so well recovered as to be enabled to return to C——.

Previous to his departure he again, and in the warmest and most feeling terms, expressed his gratitude to the whole family for the kindness, hospitality, and attention he had received. His conduct to Sidney during his stay, and on his taking leave, raised him still higher in her esteem; no hint of gratitude ever escaped him, no allusion to aught that could lead her to suspect he considered she had felt or betrayed either interest or concern for his safety; and his

whole manner and behaviour were more scrupulously respectful and attentive than they had yet been, though, through all his guarded caution to avoid wounding her delicacy, there shone forth a tenderness, an anxiety, an enthusiasm of admiration, which he had never before displayed, and which convinced her, in a manner the most soothing to her pride, how fully she possessed his affection and esteem.

CHAP. XVII.

A FEW days after Major Sedley's departure from Belle Vue, Charles Montague completed his one-and-twentieth year. Mr. Montague had long determined to celebrate this event with the utmost festivity, and to gratify Charles he invited all the tenantry on his estate to dine at Belle Vue on the occasion; and as Mrs. Montague determined to give a splendid ball the following week, to do still farther honour to her son, cards of invitation were sent to all the surrounding gentry.

Early on the morning of this momentous and joyful day to the Montague family, Sidney was awakened by a loud ringing of bells, with which the villagers ushered in the morning of the young squire's coming of age; and, knowing the family would soon be roused by this noisy peal of joy, she immediately rose, and hastened down stairs.

On going into the breakfast-room she found it empty, but was soon joined by Charles, who was in the highest spirits; and receiving her congratulations with the utmost affection, he took her out with him, to superintend the arrangement of the preparations for the reception of his numerous guests.

As it was the beginning of September, and the morning remarkably fine, Charles had tents pitched, and tables laid in front of the house, and he and Sidney gave directions, and assisted the servants till they were summoned to breakfast.

On their return to the breakfast-room, Mr. Montague, taking his son's hand, whom he had not before seen that morning, expressed the warm delight he felt at witnessing this day; adding, that he had never felt such pleasure since the hour that had first given him to his arms, and insured him a successor to his name and fortune.

Mrs. Montague, then approaching, embraced him with even greater tenderness than his father, declaring how happy she felt in being mother to a son who would do so much honour

to the name of Montague, however ancient or illustrious.

With all his levity, Charles was affected by the fond tenderness both his parents had expressed; and his eyes filled with tears of affection as he repeatedly declared that the greatest happiness he experienced on this day was their being present to enjoy it with him. Then, somewhat ashamed of the softness into which he had been betrayed, added, with a laugh, he hoped sincerely they might both live to see a son of his also of age, and just such a fine fellow as he was himself.

Mr. and Mrs. Montague smiled at this sally; and Miss Watkins then offered her congratulations in due form, expressing a hope that he would ever study to support the dignity of both the ancient and honourable houses from which he had sprung.

"Do not feel uneasy on that subject, my dear Miss Watkins," cried he, "as I am determined far to eclipse the glory of all my noble and honoured progenitors."

Fanny, who had, from her earliest infancy, considered herself as entitled to command the

exclusive attention of all around her, and had long felt jealous of the unbounded affection her parents evinced for Charles, was peculiarly offended by this fuss of preparation to celebrate his birth-day; and her congratulations were so faint, and so evidently the mere effect of necessity, that Charles told her, with a laugh, he was not fond of compliments, and begged she might not distress herself by paying any more.

Anna, on the contrary, was all bustle and gaiety; and, delighted that Charles, and not Fanny, was the object of the fête, she was eagerly and unaffectedly anxious to promote and participate in the pleasures of which it promised to be productive.

Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, on hearing Mr. Montague's intention of inviting his tenantry to Belle Vue, to celebrate his son's birth-day, begged permission to join the party, and to bring the band with them. Charles, flattered by this mark of attention, accepted their offer with great pleasure, and invited some gentlemen of his particular acquaintance to meet them; but, aware that the

natural pertness of Mr. French's disposition would prevent his being any acquisition on such an occasion, he gave no hint that could induce him to make a similar offer.

Immediately after breakfast Charles again went out, to superintend the preparations; but, quickly returning, requested his mother and the girls would also come, as he wished to shew them a present he had just received.

With this request they all complied, Fanny's curiosity inducing her to be one of the party; and, going in front of the hall-door, they saw suspended over the tent, in which Mr. Montague proposed to dine with his more respectable tenantry, a large flag, composed of white cloth, edged with green, with the arms of the Montague family, rudely executed in cloth-work, and the words "Long life and prosperity to the Noble Heir of Belle Vue" worked underneath.

To Sidney's inquiries of who had made him so proper a present, Charles replied it was his foster-brother; who having, at his request, been educated by his father to fill the office

of schoolmaster to the children of the respectable tenantry and farmers in the neighbourhood, and had since been settled in a comfortable house and small farm on the Belle Vue estate, he had had this flag executed by his own family, as a mark of his gratitude, choosing the colours white and green, as they formed the livery of the Montagues.

This little tribute of gratitude was extremely pleasing to Mr. and Mrs. Montague, as it not only evinced the affection of the young man for their son, but flattered their vanity by making him appear an object of general consequence.

Between three and four o'clock the numerous parties invited began to assemble, and continued to walk in detached parties through the lawn till summoned to dinner; the band, by Major Sedley's directions, playing the old and popular Irish airs for their amusement.

Mrs. Montague, anxious to please her son, and to pay every attention to those he had invited to celebrate his birth-day, declared her intention of dining at the same table at which Mr. Montague proposed to preside, and as

Sidney and Anna expressed a wish to be also of the party, Fanny, though extremely reluctant to have any sort of intercourse with people she deemed so infinitely beneath her, did not think proper to make any objection to join them.

Sidney had now, for the first time since her arrival at Belle Vue, an opportunity of judging how deservedly popular Charles had rendered himself in the country, as, amidst all the studied compliment and lavish expressions of affection and admiration, in which the lower Irish so freely indulge, genuine regard and pleasure were very visibly predominant; nor could she, on observing his conduct, wonder that they were so. After seeing all the numerous parties settled in the different tents, and strenuously recommending them to the care of those appointed to superintend the tables, he took a seat at the one where his own family were placed, when, without a look that could indicate that he considered himself as their superior, and a manner totally devoid of any species of proudly condescending affability, he freely indulged in all the gaiety and frolic so

natural to his disposition. He encouraged and returned their jokes with the most cordial good humour, at the same time devoting his attention to their comfort and accommodation, encouraging the timid, and pressing all to partake of the social cheer with that species of frank and friendly warmth so necessary to convince them of their hearty welcome. Enchanted by his manner and encouraged by his example, every countenance appeared to share the general hilarity.

Mr. Montague, though not quite so gay as his son, was equally affable and cordial, and seemed extremely pleased with, and very desirous to promote the general joy that prevailed. Mrs. Montague, however anxious to please, could not succeed to her wishes, as her elegant and polished manners were not exactly suitable to her present companions, and none others did she know how to assume; yet her gentle affability prevented her from giving any sort of offence.

To give herself any trouble to please, Fanny seldom thought necessary in any company; but amidst her present companions she considered it

quite superfluous; almost taking pains to be disagreeable, and, though sitting next her mother, she observed a haughty and repulsive silence, interrupted only by incessant calls to the servants attending, or occasional remarks of how extremely uncomfortable she felt herself.

Immediately on the cloth being removed, Mr. Bradley, one of the oldest and most respectable of the tenants, rose from his seat, and, filling his glass to the brim, called on every person present to follow his example; when, after a characteristic speech, he concluded by drinking Charles's health in the words on the flag, "Long life and prosperity to the Noble Heir of Belle Vue!"

This toast was drank with universal enthusiasm. Charles, eloquently and affectionately thanking them, added, "you must now drink a toast of my proposing;" and, filling his glass, called out, "Concord and prosperity to our Green Isle; and may the warm and generous hearts of her sons never be chilled by adversity!"

This toast was, as he expected, drank with bursts of applause; when, again filling his

glass, he called out, "I shall now propose the health of a hero, whom Irishmen may be proud to call their countryman—one who has gloriously retrieved the military honour of his country—the immortal Wellington!"

The honest pride with which that great name is associated in every Irish bosom was manifest in the loud and incessant acclamation with which the toast was reiterated. When the clamour at length subsided, a sturdy old man at the lower end of the table exclaimed, that he had drank his honour's toast to the last drop; but that, according to his way of thinking, there was one great blemish in that same Wellington.

"And what may that be, my good friend?" cried Charles.

"He is an absentee, sir."

"A glorious absentee he is, indeed," said Charles: "would to Heaven that all our absentees as amply sustained the honour of their native soil!"

"Or," cried Mr. Bradley, "that they could all plead as good reasons for carrying away their talents, their industry, and their wealth, across the channel."

"But may not their talents and their influence be employed as beneficially in attending to their duty in the senate as in the field?" asked one of the officers, unaware that he was touching on a most tender theme."

"Aye, aye," rejoined the old man, warmed with wine and nationality; "you mean, sir, in the Parliament, no doubt;—but only I am after hoping to see our young squire, God bless him! *in* for the county yet, I would say, now, that the Irish Parliament is but a bit of the English Parliament; that ——"

"Don't say it then at all," a good-humoured farmer roared out from the next table; "sure a true Irishman will be as honest a Parliament-man in London as in Dublin."

"Well, well," replied the former, "I'll only just say that I believe many of them *squireens* who gave their votes for the Union have well rued the ——"

"You mean," cried Charles, laughing; "that they sold their birth-right for pottage, and were afterwards forced to pay for the mess themselves. But come, my good friends, we will not talk politics; it is a con-

founded stupid subject; and all true Irishmen are fond of mirth and good humour."

"Very true, sir," cried Mr. Bradley; "and there never was a better nor a truer-hearted Irishman than yourself. But, sir, with your leave, let us drink long life and prosperity to all gentlemen who spend their money on their own estates, encourage their poor tenants, and treat them, sir, as you and Mr. Montague have treated your's to-day, and every other day in the year."

Mrs. Montague, fearing that the heads of her female guests would not remain long proof against these national toasts, which they drank, or affected to drink, in bumpers, now rose from table, and proposed retiring to the house to tea, that they might be ready by the time the gentlemen left the dinner-table, as Charles intended to have a dance.

Sidney and Anna, who had felt greatly entertained by a species of humour, keen observation, and free unforced merriment they had never before witnessed, at Mrs. Montague's request undertook to entertain those who preferred following the ladies to remaining in the tent. As general conversation was out of

the question, they sat down to the piano-forte, and alternately played and sang pieces selected from the Irish Melodies; while Fanny, throwing herself haughtily on a sofa, complained in a low voice to Miss Watkins how dreadfully she was annoyed by such sort of people.

Early in the evening, Major Sedley, Captain Elmore, Mr. Radcliffe, and the other gentlemen that Charles had invited, came into the drawing-room, and were soon followed by the remainder of the party, who considered their departure as a signal for breaking up.

Charles did not make his appearance till he had first gone round among all the other parties assembled, who had lighted bonfires through the grounds, and, after seeing them liberally supplied with drink, refreshments, and music, and dancing some sets in turn among each party, he returned to the house.

Tea being by this time over, he immediately led the way to the ball-room, in the middle of which the flag was suspended over a brilliant lustre, the whole room decorated with a great variety of rustic though fanciful ornaments, which Sidney and Anna had designed.

Major Sedley, who had during the course of the day devoted his whole attention to the amusement of the party, among whom he had been a self-invited guest, now joined Sidney, and asked her if she felt too much fatigued by her exertions to venture to join in the dance.

"So far from feeling wearied," said Sidney, "I must confess myself rustic enough to have been excessively amused by a display of genuine humour and mirth, which I have never before had an opportunity of seeing, and which I consider the peculiar characteristic of my country."

"I cannot express the pleasure I feel in finding our sentiments, on almost every subject, so exactly similar," cried he, with energy; "and, though no exertion of mine could have produced the same degree of mirth and hilarity that Montague's more happy genius has this day diffused, I cannot describe the pleasure I felt in a scene which displayed the real character of my countrymen, in every rank of life, in colours that gave me a sensation of gratified pride in knowing myself a native of the same soil."

A call from Charles of " Gentlemen, choose your partners," interrupted Major Sedley, who, taking Sidney's hand, was leading her forward, when Charles, hastily advancing, said, " As I must now, my dear Sedley, consider you as a friend to whom I may frankly declare my wishes, I request you will not, on the present occasion, dance with Sidney, as I am anxious to banish all distinction of rank for this evening, and have therefore provided her and Anna with partners, with whom I know they will dance to oblige me, as you, I hope, will pay me the same compliment."

" Nothing could be more foreign to my intentions, I assure you," cried Major Sedley, eagerly, " than even the semblance of such undue selfishness: I simply consulted my own inclination, without a thought of the appearance it might wear. I have said thus much to account for what might otherwise seem so inattentive to your plans; and indeed I feel more truly gratified by the present proof of your friendship than I should by any other distinction you could have shewn me."

" I thank you most warmly, my dear

fellow," cried Charles, "first for the justice you do me, and next for the sacrifice of your inclination to mine; and, to make you what amends I can, I will introduce you to a very pretty girl, who will feel herself much flattered by the honour of dancing with you; and I will also engage that Sidney shall fulfil her present engagement on the night of the ball: you will not forget the promise, Sidney, that I have made in your name."

Sidney replying that she would remember and fulfil it, Charles went away, accompanied by Sedley.

They had not been many moments gone, when a young man Sidney had observed sitting near her at dinner approached, and, with some awkwardness, though great respect, requested she would have the goodness to dance with him; adding, he would not take the liberty of asking her, had not young Mr. Montague insisted on his doing so.

"I shall feel great pleasure in dancing with you," said Sidney, in an accent of the most encouraging sweetness: then, giving him her hand, followed, or rather led him to the set which Charles was forming.

This he found no easy task to accomplish, as scarcely one of the girls or young men present knew any thing of country dances, though perfectly versed in all the jig steps and figures used at *patrons;* and, ashamed of their ignorance, and unwilling to dance in such a circle, he could scarcely conquer their reluctance and timidity. His perseverance was, however, crowned with success, as the parents of the young people interfered, and insisted they should all do their best, since the young squire was so good as to wish it.

When the party first commenced dancing, they unavoidably fell into confusion; but those who knew the figure directing their whole attention to set the others right, they at length succeeded in keeping them in very good order, assisted by Montague's constantly calling for the Irish jig tunes with which they were most acquainted. Their natural passion for dancing, and quick observation, soon enabled them to proceed not only with ease, but delight; and Sidney could scarcely forbear smiling at the grotesque, though animated and expressive, attitudes into which they threw themselves, to humour the tune, as they

phrased it, every feature and every gesture corresponding to the music.

Charles and Captain Elmore, from genuine humour and ready talents of imitation, joined to the love of mirth, so inherent in the disposition of both, quickly acquired and entered into the full spirit of this species of natural pantomime; and as their motives were evidently to please their associates, by complying with their own modes, their efforts were rewarded by loud and universal plaudits, and by the good will and admiration of all the people present. Major Sedley made no effort to follow their example; but the lively and graceful affability of his manners, his unremitting attention to all those around him, and his anxiety to keep his several partners in their places, and to render them easy and satisfied with themselves, though not so generally admired as Charles's and Captain Elmore's striking powers of entertainment, which were so much in unison with their own taste, yet commanded a universal prepossession in his favour. That he was a *ra'al* gentleman

was uttered in audible whispers round the room; a species of praise which those who are not in the habit of hearing it applied can never perfectly comprehend, as it literally implies almost every thing great, good, and amiable.

Fanny, though disdaining the idea of mingling among such a party with any view of joining in their amusements, yet derived some satisfaction from deriding what she had not sufficient taste to comprehend; and, considering their animated sensibility to the charms of music, and characteristic display of their feelings, as the mere effects of ignorance, evinced her contempt in a manner too obvious to be misunderstood, which inspired Charles with a degree of resentment that he felt it difficult to restrain, though it impelled him to redouble his exertions to please and amuse his guests.

As Mrs. Montague had declared her intention of being wholly guided by her son's wishes, she made no move to break up the party, till Charles, finding himself and friends equally weary, proposed to adjourn to the supper-room. There, placing himself at the foot of the

table, he urged so quick a succession of bumper toasts, that his own head, and those of many of the party, soon became giddy, and their noise and merriment proportionably loud; which annoying Miss Watkins, she was the first to retire to her room.

The elder people of the party, growing somewhat ashamed of the tumult, now proposed their departure; and, as Mr. Montague, fearing their joy might terminate in a complete uproar, made no opposition, they all immediately rose.

Mr. Bradley, who had, during the day, been spokesman and director to his friends, in their name and his own, returned thanks to Mr. Montague, and the family in general, for the great honour conferred on them; and concluded by expressing their joint obligation to Major Sedley and Captain Elmore for having so kindly studied their amusement by having provided the band for their entertainment, and for their kindness and affability, including all the other gentlemen present.

Charles declaring that he would drink Mr.

Bradley's health, and that the whole party should pledge him, they made no opposition, though they refused his pressing entreaties to stay longer, from finding them unseconded by Mr. Montague.

Major Sedley, Captain Elmore, and the other gentlemen, excessively fatigued, also took their leave, nor could all Charles's eloquence induce them to prolong their stay.

Fanny's ill-disguised resentment at having been an object of so little consequence during the day, and her inability to interrupt the mirth and harmony that had prevailed, now broke forth in sly sneers or open invectives; and she expressed her astonishment how any person could endure such society. Charles might, perhaps, feel flattered by such low adulation, although she despised it very heartily; but how Sidney or Anna could have mixed among such a party, she was surprised, unless, indeed, they had their own reasons for so doing.

These taunts and inuendos renewed the displeasure that Charles had felt at her previous conduct; and, off his guard from the

general excitement of the day, his anger burst forth in a torrent of the severest sarcasms on her pride, pertness, and ill-temper; and he concluded by warning her how she again ventured to address similar language to him, or throw out such insinuations against either Sidney or Anna, who were as superior to her in sense and temper as they were in beauty and accomplishments.

Fanny's wrath at these reproaches, such as had never before been addressed to her, was almost convulsive; and, sobbing with passion, she retorted by absolute abuse of Charles and Sidney, declaring they had mutually entered into a league to insult her.

To this accusation Charles replied by a laugh of contempt, saying, their league was likely to be powerfully strengthened.

As Mr. Montague had left the room previous to the commencement of this altercation, Mrs. Montague vainly attempted to interfere, alternately endeavouring to silence Charles, or to lead Fanny away. Charles, too much intoxicated to heed propriety, for the first time in his life remained insensible to her entreaties

and commands; and Fanny, also resisting her efforts, continued by turns sobbing and scolding, till she fell into a fit of hysteric screaming, that recalled Mr. Montague to the room.

Alarmed and astonished by the situation of his daughter, the angry and inflamed looks of his son, though now silent, while Sidney and Anna sat fixed to their seats, not daring to speak or interfere, Mr. Montague vainly demanded an explanation, which Mrs. Montague weeping with terror and displeasure could not give him; and, taking Fanny at her mother's request in his arms, he carried her to her chamber, accompanied by Mrs. Montague.

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed Anna, the moment they were gone, "what could have put Fanny into such a rage? I never saw any thing like it in my life. I was afraid to say a word; and, though I am sure I cannot guess what I did to offend her, she will do all she can to make mamma angry with me."

"What either of us did to displease her," said Sidney, much agitated, "I cannot conjecture; and yet her anger was violent to

both, nor can I at all understand what she means by my entering into a league to insult her."

"It does not signify in the least what she means," cried Charles, recovering his good humour; "and I am heartily glad we are rid of her: so come now, like good girls, sing me a song that will drive all her nonsense out of our heads."

"I could not indeed, Charles," said Anna; "I should be afraid of mamma's hearing me."

"Then, you must oblige me, Sidney," cried he, catching her hand; "you are not afraid of your mamma, I hope."

In vain Sidney argued, remonstrated, and even positively refused to comply with his request. Regardless of her entreaties and opposition, and heedless of the impropriety of his conduct, he vehemently insisted on her compliance, keeping firm hold of her arm to prevent her leaving the room, as she vainly attempted.

Some time had thus elapsed when Mr. Montague returned to the room, and, advancing to Sidney, said, in a voice of great and un-

usual displeasure, " Why Sidney, do I find you here? Is this conduct, do you think, consistent with propriety?"

Shocked at her uncle's words and manner, Sidney replied, in great agitation, " It has not been my own wish to stay here, sir, I assure you."

" But it has been mine," exclaimed Charles, " and here you shall stay as long as I please, just to punish you for refusing to sing for me."

" Here she shall not stay, Charles," cried Mr. Montague, angrily; " I insist on your letting go her hand this moment."

" Confound me if I do," exclaimed Charles petulantly, and offended by the tone of authority in which his father spoke to him.

Trembling with terror and surprise, Sidney, in a voice scarcely audible, begged of him to allow her to retire; but Charles, with all the obstinacy of intoxication and irritation, refused compliance.

Mr. Montague then, laying his hand on his arm, said, " If you do not choose to quarrel with me, Charles, no longer persist in detaining Sidney."

Somewhat sobered by the cold solemnity of his father's voice and manner, Charles suffered Sidney to withdraw her hand, muttering, half aloud, that he did not wish to quarrel with any person, much less to quarrel with his father.

The moment Sidney was at liberty, she hurried from the room to Anna's apartment, who, on perceiving her father so highly displeased, had gone away the instant after he entered.

Terrified by the scene she had just witnessed, and inexpressibly mortified at the displeasure her uncle had expressed towards her, she long continued to converse with Anna on the subject, who at length succeeded in soothing her with the assurance her father could not have intended any particular reproach to her, but, provoked by seeing Fanny in such a situation, had, without any design of wounding her feelings, spoken with harshness.

Immediately on Sidney's leaving the room, Mr. Montague, without entering into any discussion with his son, which in his present

state would be unnecessarily engaging in a quarrel, rang the bell for his own man, and, consigning him to his care, retired to his room.

CHAP. XVIII.

NEXT morning Sidney rose late, and, dreading to meet any of the party before they had time to adjust their contest of the preceding night, she did not go down to the breakfast-room till a servant came to inform her that all the family were assembled.

On going into the room she found the whole party, except Charles, seated round the breakfast-table. Endeavouring to conquer her uneasiness, she accosted them all with the usual salutations of the morning: Mrs. Montague replied with distant politeness, Mr. Montague with a reserve and formality with which he had never before addressed her, Fanny by a slight inclination of her head, and Miss Watkins with rather more than her wonted ungraciousness.

Offended and disgusted, Sidney hesitated for a moment what part to act, but, checking her too quick feelings, took her seat in silence.

In a short time Charles entered the room, and, without seeming to remember what had occurred, addressed his family as usual, and then sat down at the table.

With as little of his accustomed kindness as he had spoken to Sidney, Mr. Montague replied to his son, who, struck by his manner, and his mother's and Fanny's total silence and evident anger, immediately demanded the meaning of the reception he had received.

" A recollection of your own conduct. Charles," said Mr. Montague, coldly, " should render that question unnecessary ; and now that you are in possession of your senses, you should apologize to your mother and sister for your violent and improper behaviour of last night."

This reply recalled to Charles's recollection something of the scene of the preceding night; and, after a moment's silence, he angrily replied, " Whatever was my conduct to Fanny, sir, she wantonly provoked it; if I have behaved with any impropriety, or said any thing offensive to my mother, to her I am ready to apologize, but with respect to Fanny I must beg leave to be excused."

"Charles," exclaimed Mr. Montague, angrily, "this is not a manner in which you have ever been accustomed to treat me, and such as I will not brook; it shall, however, pass for the present; but remember I must have some conversation with you after breakfast."

"Whenever you please, sir," said Charles, growing very pale; and, rising from the table without tasting a morsel, he threw himself on a chair next a window, against which he leaned his head.

Anna, instantly starting up, followed him, saying, "You are ill, dear Charles!" endeavouring to support his head: "shall I assist you to the couch?"

"No, no," cried he, in a low voice; "I am rather sick,—that is all."

Mrs. Montague forgetting her displeasure in anxiety on seeing Charles appear so ill, rose from her seat, and, going to him, took his hand, saying, "Charles, my dearest love, how is it you feel yourself affected? Think no more of what has past, but kindly relieve my fears."

"Do not be unnecessarily alarmed, my dear mother," replied he: "I have deserved

what I suffer, and must bear with it;" then in a moment after added, "To say or do any thing offensive to you, I never intended; and if I have done so, I am sincerely sorry for it."

"I am well convinced you did not, my love," said Mrs. Montague, tenderly; "and I should not have attended to any little folly you uttered last night; and I am extremely sorry I either felt or evinced the slightest displeasure to you."

Charles, unable to make any reply, rose from his seat, and languidly walked towards the door. Mr. Montague, alarmed at seeing him appear so much indisposed, instantly followed, and calling out "Charles; my dear boy, lean on me," and taking his arm, they left the room together, accompanied by Mrs. Montague and Anna.

Sidney, whom a confused dread that her uncle's displeasure to both herself and Charles, had originated in something that Fanny had hinted of her wish to engage his son's affection, had refrained from offering any assistance, and kept her seat in silence; when Fanny, with a disdainful toss of her head, exclaimed, "It was

no wonder Charles behaved so ill to her papa and mamma, when they made such a fool of him."

In the truth of this remark Miss Watkins warmly joined, animadverting with considerable virulence on his disrespect and impropriety, not only to his parents, but to his elder sister; and expressing her wonder how either Mr. Montagne or her sister could pass over such conduct.

Fanny protested she did not care; he would destroy himself, and not her: thank Heaven, she was perfectly independent of him and every other person!

Disgusted by this conversation, Sidney seized the earliest opportunity of retiring to her room, where she was quickly joined by Anna, who told her that Charles was now quite well, and had gone with his father into the library; adding, that from some things that had dropped from her mother, she fancied Fanny had been telling her father some stories of Charles, about which he wished to question him, though of what nature she could not guess; she concluded her information by the most undisguised avowal of her dread of Fanny's machinations, and earnestly wishing she was

married, as she was a constant source of torment to all those who were unfortunately doomed to reside with her; for even now scarcely could Charles persuade his mother he had not designedly offended Fanny, though in what way nobody could conjecture.

Anna's information served still farther to confirm the suspicion Sidney had formed, and determined her to speak to Charles on the subject, and, if she found she was right, to apply to her uncle for permission to leave his house, and reside with the lady who had educated and lived with her till her father's death, and who had since been married to a gentleman of good fortune in the neighbourhood.

To form this resolution gave Sidney severe pain, as it would at once remove her from any farther chance of meeting Sedley, and might perhaps preclude his ever declaring his sentiments, from never being able to learn the motives of what might appear to him so strange a step; but prudence and propriety at length triumphed over every softer feeling, and, though without entering much on the subject, she informed Anna of her fears, and requested she

would mention to Charles her wish of speaking to him the first time he was at leisure.

Anna tried to dissuade her from putting this resolution in practice, but, on finding her persuasions unavailing, promised to deliver her message to Charles on the first opportunity that offered, and in the course of the day informed her that he would follow them when they went out to take the usual evening's walk.

Sidney did not again see her uncle till they met at dinner, and then perceived, with some surprise, that his manner to both her and his son was precisely what it had ever been, or, if there was any alteration, rather more affectionate to each. This observation did not, however, change her resolution, and, on leaving the dining-room, she and Anna set out to walk as usual.

They were soon joined by Charles, who, after conversing for a few moments on indifferent subjects, said, " Anna has told me, Sidney, that you wished to speak to me on business. Have you any objection to her being present? if you have, come with me to the garden."

Sidney replied that she had none, as Anna

was informed of what she wished to speak to him about; and then, though not without some confusion, mentioned the different hints Fanny had at various times given of a design on her part to engage his affections. "Of the falsehood of these insinuations, you, my dear Charles," continued she, "are a very competent judge. My uncle, perhaps, is not so; and I earnestly entreat you will tell me whether I am right in suspecting that some part of his conversation with you to-day was on this subject."

Surprised and embarrassed by this inquiry, the last of all others which he expected would have been the subject of her desired interview, Charles hesitated for some moments, as if not well knowing what reply to make; but at length said, "For such a question, Sidney, I was not prepared; however, since you have asked it, I will answer with truth; and must therefore frankly confess that to learn my sentiments respecting you was my father's motive for desiring a conversation with me to-day."

"And what, may I ask," said Sidney, much agitated, "were the purport of his inquiries?"

" I would prefer not answering this question," replied Charles; " but, as you might suspect something more disagreeable than really occurred, I will relate the whole of what passed.

" On our being alone, my father told me he wished to speak to me, for the purpose of learning my sentiments on a subject in which he was peculiarly interested; and that he would expect me to answer his questions with honour and sincerity. Surprised at this address, I told him I could not imagine to what he meant to allude; but, as I never had on any subject deceived him, neither would I now. He then, and very abruptly, asked me what were my feelings with respect to you? Astonished by the question, and faith, I must say, diverted by it also, I burst into a laugh; but, on seeing him look seriously displeased, I replied I really did not understand what he meant.

" To be plain then, sir," cried he, angrily; " I ask you if your affections are engaged to your cousin?"

" I was now in turn a little offended, and replied, rather tartly, that I loved and esteemed you as you deserved: but on my father's asking me with some emotion if I treated him well in thus trifling with his feelings, or if such was the promise I had given him, I began clearly to comprehend the real object of his inquiries; and I then with perfect gravity assured him, that, with as warm an affection as I bore to Anna, I loved you, but nothing more: and begged in turn to know who or what had led him to that suspicion, or had induced him to make such an inquiry.—My father for a long time tried to evade this question; but I pressed it so home, and so strenuously insisted on a gratification of my curiosity as I had already satisfied his, that he could not avoid answering me, he confessed that Fanny was the person from whom he had learned that my affection to you prompted me to engage in quarrels with her, as I dreaded that she might disapprove my attachment, and might perhaps use her influence against it. Provoked beyond measure by this information, I without reserve told him,

that if my affections had been engaged, as he had been taught to suspect, to answer the purposes of low malevolence and mean jealousy, Fanny was not the person who should ever presume to control them. That they were not so was the fact, though why I could not tell, except that I had always looked on you as my sister, and been treated by you with the frank affection of a brother; and that I was resolved to pursue the same mode of conduct, and would ever openly, and to the best of my abilities, support you against one who had with rancorous spleen sought to imbitter every moment of your life. My father was a little hurt by my vehemence, and seemed to consider that I had too harshly censured Fanny; and here our conversation ended."

Sidney's feelings in listening to this narrative were deeply affected; and, after thanking Charles for his kindness, she said, with great emotion, "After what you have just told me, Charles, I can no longer think of remaining here; I must apply to my uncle for permission to go and reside with Mrs. Orpen, whose house and arms will, I am convinced, be gladly opened to receive me."

"What I have told you," cried Charles, "you never should have heard, if had you not so earnestly desired it; and I now tell you, that unless you choose to create a general quarrel in the family, you will take no such step: my father never would consent to it; neither, I most solemnly swear to you, would I."

"Great as has always been my uncle's kindness to me," said Sidney, sarcely suppressing her tears, "he can no longer wish me to be an inmate of his house: and surely I cannot be mean enough to know myself an unwelcome guest, and yet to remain."

"You wrong my father," cried Charles, "and indeed Sidney, you must know you do so. He does not wish me to marry at present; and even if he did, it would be to a woman with a ready-money fortune, to clear the incumbrances on his estate: and, besides all that, he thinks us too nearly connected to be united. He dealt very openly with me; and when I assured him that he, or no human being, could be more remote from wishing for such a connexion than you were, that marriage was a subject on which I had never seriously thought,

and a state into which I should at present dislike to enter, he was perfectly satisfied, and assured me that no person should make his house disagreeable to you, as he loved you as well as he did either of his daughters, and would take as anxious care of your interests; and he charged me not to drop a hint of his speaking to me on such a subject, to any of the family."

"You are very kind, Charles," said Sidney, sighing deeply, "in thus seeking to sooth my feelings; but they are, and must be, very much exposed while I remain here."

"I swear to you, on my honour, I have spoken strict truth,—you compelled me to do so: I will, if you please, accompany you to my father, and call on him to say whether I have added a single syllable to his own express declaration. If you choose I will go; but this house I will not permit you to leave, nor will my father be less resolute. If you wish to drive matters to extremities, do so. My father will not disavow what he has said, though to wound the feelings of a niece he tenderly loves, will, I know, give him a degree

of pain you will hereafter perhaps wish that you had spared him."

Overpowered by his vehemence, Sidney remained silent: and Anna then said, "You have been always considered a girl of very good understanding, Sidney—a thousand times more so than your volatile cousin Anna: yet, permit me to say, that you are not acting very wisely on the present occasion. You are perfectly sensible of Fanny's ill-nature, and know she does not in any instance suffer even me to escape. Of my papa's affection you can have no doubt, nor, I am sure, of either Charles's or mine; and yet, to gratify Fanny's malevolence or her whims, you are resolved to offend papa, and that for no reason on earth, for your views and his are in perfect unison, though you would take some foolish pains to convince people they are not. Now pray for once take my advice; mind your own little affairs, and allow Fanny to feed on gall, since it is an aliment so suited to her taste."

"If Charles," said Sidney, after some consideration, "will give me his candid senti-

ments, and assure me they are so, I will be entirely guided by them."

"You are a sweet creature, after all," cried Charles, affectionately, "and I am sorry I spoke so harshly to you. I will give you the same advice that, if my life depended on my sincerity, I would offer; and that is, to act precisely as you have ever done, without taking the slightest notice of your having heard a syllable of what my father would be very sorry to think you had heard. I will keep my eye on Fanny, and take care she shall not be quite so much at liberty as she has been: so will my father also, as he is seriously displeased with her. I know her motives better than she imagines; but, as she is my sister, to you or no human being will I mention my suspicions."

Sidney thanked him with great tenderness, saying she would, as she had promised, be guided entirely by his advice; and, requesting that he would not take any farther notice of the affair to Fanny, dropped the subject, as she felt a degree of shame and mortification she could not conquer in hearing it discussed.

In despite of Sidney's utmost exertions, this transaction made a deep and painful impression on her mind. Her uncle's constant alarm at the hint of his son's regarding her in any other light than that of a cousin, wounded her pride, and depressed her spirits; and to be thus cast at the mercy of Fanny's dark and malevolent jealousy oppressed her beyond any other circumstance of her life. When the first shock however had subsided, she reflected that her fears on this subject were ill-founded, as her uncle's mind, both from Charles's solemn assurances and her own observation of his manner, she was convinced, was now perfectly at ease; and that she had not been compelled abruptly to quit Belle Vue under apparently, or what might at least have been represented as degrading circumstances, afforded some consolation to her wounded feelings.

By no effort, however, could she wholly conquer the depression of her spirits, which soon became obvious to Major Sedley's watchful attention. He hung on her looks with a tenderness of solicitude that more forcibly than ever convinced her of his affection; and,

on every opportunity he appeared studiously anxious to draw forth the cause of what weighed so heavily on her mind. Sidney, though delicately cautious to avoid even a hint on the subject, and careful to evade any private conversation that might give him an opportunity of making a direct inquiry, was yet soothed and gratified as well by his attention, as by the still farther conviction it afforded of her power over his heart.

Whatever conversation passed between Mr. and Mrs. Montague and Fanny on this subject Sidney could never learn; but that her uncle had spoken decidedly she could not doubt; for, though Mrs. Montague's conduct had been always too guardedly polite to render any change very obvious, she was even more attentive than usual, and Miss Watkins and Fanny were evidently restrained by some powerful motive, as both were, though not friendly, at least distantly civil, and suffered her to escape their sneers and observations.

She and Anna were now busily engaged, in making various ornaments designed to decorate the ball-room on the night of the

proposed ball in honour of Charles's birthday, but a very few days distant. One morning that Anna had gone with her mother and Miss Watkins to C——, to purchase materials for their work, Fanny strolled into the room where Sidney was sitting alone, painting some devices for the occasion, and, saying she wanted some coloured silk, took up a portrait book of Sidney's lying in her work-box, and in searching through it, discovered the picture of her father.

"Your father," cried she, turning to Sidney, after looking at the picture for some moments, "was a handsome man, and thought, I suppose, he made a good market of his beauty when he married your mother; but, like many other very wise people, he was a little deceived."

"I know not," cried Sidney, exceedingly shocked and surprised at hearing such a speech made of a fondly beloved and deceased parent, "to what you can allude. My mother was ever the object of my father's fondest affection, and most deservedly possessed it; how then cauyou think he was deceived?"

"Fine sentiments are sometimes very useful to conceal low arts," cried Fanny, disdainfully; "and always very necessary to those whose situation obliges them to have recourse to meanness and falsehood, to secure other people's friendship; they will not, however, have much effect on me."

"If by this gross speech, Fanny," cried Sidney, with excusable severity, "you mean any allusion to my situation, I can not hesitate to tell you that I should despise myself if I thought it deserving any serious notice or refutation."

"You need not take that trouble," said Fanny, throwing down the picture, and moving towards the door; "your conduct is very well understood by all except those whom Charles's influence has secured in your favour; but he, perhaps, may one day feel the blessing of an artful and pennyless wife; and my papa may too late discover the nature of your gratitude for his kindness."

Then, hastily quitting the room, she closed the door violently after her.

Not all Sidney's acquired fortitude could

enable her to withstand this attack; and, taking up her father's picture, and looking at it, she exclaimed, "Good Heavens! my father! can Fanny Montague,—can your niece,—can one so nearly connected with you thus cruelly and wantonly insult your unfortunate child?"

When, at length, anger yielding to grief at a recollection of his fond and indulgent tenderness, and the cruel reverse to which his death had exposed her, she burst into a passion of tears, and continued to weep with bitterness, till, hearing the door open, and a step approaching, with violent emotion she involuntarily threw the picture on the table, and, without looking to see who entered, she endeavoured to make her escape in the opposite direction, when her progress was suddenly arrested by Major Sedley. Catching her hand, he exclaimed, in a voice of unrestrained emotion, "Dearest Miss Montague, most beloved of human beings, what can have thus affected you? Whatever are your sorrows or your apprehensions, confide them, I conjure you, to one, who passionately adores you, and will guard every thought and every

feeling you repose in his breast with more scrupulous care than he would guard his honour or his life."

"I do not distrust your honour," cried Sidney, in breathless agitation; "but in you I cannot, ought not, to confide; pride, propriety, all—all forbid it!" then hearing Charles's voice in the hall, added, "in mercy, in pity, detain me no longer!" and, hastily withdrawing her hand, hurried out by the door opposite to the one by which Montague was approaching, and reached her own room unobserved.

The violent perturbation of her spirits for some time precluded her from distinctly reflecting on what had passed; but, when she could take a cool review of her conduct, she censured herself severely for the folly and weakness of thus giving way to her emotions, and suffering herself to be so unguardedly surprised by Major Sedley, who must have felt much surprise on beholding her in such violent agitation, and might perhaps feel displeasure at being so directly and abruptly refused any answer to his anxious inquiries.

Regretting the past, angry with herself, and deeply offended with Fanny, she continued in her room till she was joined by Anna; who, with eager curiosity, demanded what new turn had occurred in her absence.

Sidney related Fanny's conduct, though she forbore any mention of the manner in which Sedley had surprised her. Anna, after venting her indignation against Fanny's meanness and ill-nature, declared she was convinced that her papa had spoken to her with displeasure respecting the information she had given him; "and therefore, my dear Sidney," continued she, "you must only consider her conduct as the mere madness of disappointed jealousy and anger; for, though Charles would not speak out the other evening, I know very well he suspects her designs on the Major's heart, and imputes all her malice to that source, and so most assuredly do I; and therefore after all," added she, laughing, "it is only the fury of a disappointed woman, and as such you should despise it."

This philosophy was more easy to preach than to practise; but, fearful of merely creating

unnecessary dissension in her uncle's family, without answering any other end, Sidney determined to remain silent, and in no other manner to display resentment than by detaching herself wholly from Fanny's society, and never on any occasion addressing her, unless when compelled.

How to act with respect to Major Sedley she next debated; and, after much fluctuation of opinion, she determined, if he did not himself recur to the subject, to take no farther notice of it; and if he did, to apologize for her abruptness by frankly confessing the agitation of her mind, though what occasioned her emotion propriety must induce her to conceal.

Somewhat tranquillized by this resolution, she at length followed Anna to the room in which they usually sat at work, and where they continued till summoned to dinner, as they were very anxious to finish the ornaments they were preparing.

Fanny, at their meeting, and during the remainder of the day, behaved to Sidney as if nothing particular had occurred; and,

seeming in some degree satisfied with this effusion of rancour, took no farther notice of her.

Major Sedley did not make his appearance either at dinner or during the course of the evening; though Captain Elmore, who spent the day at Belle Vue, expressed some surprise at his absence.

The next morning, while Sidney and Anna were sitting at work, Charles and Captain Elmore came in together, as they frequently did, to offer their opinion and advice; and Charles then inquiring for Major Sedley, Captain Elmore replied, that on his return to C——, on the preceding evening, his servant had informed him that his master had accompanied Mr. French on a visit to his father, who lived about twenty miles distant, and that neither proposed returning till the day of the destined ball.

On hearing this information Sidney felt a sort of confused fear that resentment at her refusal to answer his inquiries, and at her abrupt departure, had influenced Sedley to make this visit; and, knowing the intimate friendship

that subsisted between him and Captain Elmore, she cautiously raised her eyes to try if his countenance would convey any confirmation of her suspicions; but from that she could form no judgment, as, whatever was his opinion or knowledge on the subject, his countenance or manner conveyed no index from whence to gather it, both being equally undesigning and unembarrassed.

CHAP. XIX.

SIDNEY and Anna continued to labour with unremitting diligence to accomplish their task, in which they succeeded to their own and Charles's satisfaction. As constant employment had prevented Sidney from dwelling too intently on disagreeable subjects, and as she hoped, from being engaged to dance the first set with Sedley, that she might find some opportunity of making her peace with him, if he had been offended, she rose early on the morning of the destined fête in tolerably good spirits, and, assisted by Charles and Anna, spent her day in arranging the ornaments they had prepared to the best advantage. As no expense had been spared to render the room beautiful and brilliant, and the floor being elegantly chalked in various devices suitable to the occasion, it looked so handsome, that Mrs. Montague, notwithstanding Fanny's cold

silence, bestowed many praises on the taste with which Sidney and Anna had executed their task, declaring herself infinitely obliged to both; and Mr. Montague and Charles, with still more affectionate cordiality, expressed their admiration, and returned their thanks to each.

About half past nine the company began to assemble, and, at a little past ten, the rooms were so well filled, that Mrs. Montague begged of Charles to commence the ball.

Sidney, who had in vain watched for Major Sedley's entrance, now began to despair of his coming at all, as every officer quartered at C—— had arrived except himself and Captain Elmore. She was beginning to form a thousand vague conjectures of what could have occurred to detain him, as she could scarcely suppose that any resentment he might indulge towards her could be sufficiently powerful to induce his absence; when, as Charles was leading Lady Anne French to the head of the room to open the ball, Major Sedley and Captain Elmore entered. After paying his compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Montague, the

Major approached to where Sidney was sitting.

Pleased at seeing him appear after having almost given up all hope of his coming, yet ashamed at a recollection of their last meeting, Sidney addressed him on his joining her with some confusion; but, without appearing to notice it, he, with reserved and ceremonious politeness, begged leave to remind her of the promise with which she had honoured him, to hold herself engaged to him for the first set that evening.

Disconcerted by a manner so totally unlike that with which he had usually accosted her, Sidney gave him her hand without speaking, and he led her in silence to her place.

Sorry for having wounded his feelings so much as his manner appeared to indicate, and anxious to atone for any offence she might have given him, Sidney was beginning to address him with an intention of leading to the subject, and of apologizing for her conduct; when, startled by the excessive paleness of his countenance, she concluded that he was ill, and with

great sweetness, though with much embarrassment, expressed her fear; adding, that if he felt at all indisposed, she requested he would sit down.

The moment she spoke, the deepest crimson dyed Major Sedley's cheeks, and in a low and faultering voice he thanked her for her attention, but declared he felt perfectly well.

Called on to join in the dance, Sidney had no time to make any farther expostulation. No other opportunity of again speaking occurred till they had reached the bottom of the room, when, as they were standing to preserve the set, Sidney, feeling herself called on to offer some apology for what had so evidently offended him, forced herself to say, "I fear, Major Sedley, you must have considered my conduct the other day as rather extraordinary; I did not, believe me, intend it as such, but I was thrown off my guard by having been very particularly distressed."

"Why should Miss Montague deem any explanation due to me," cried Major Sedley, in a voice bordering on resentment; "Much more indispensably am I called on to apologize

to her for officious inquiries I had no right to make, and for which I should have instantly solicited her pardon, could I have believed that the occurrence, or aught connected with it, as far at least as I was concerned, could have rested a moment on her mind. To say I lament my conduct, may perhaps appear superfluous; but to declare that I shall ever in future studiously avoid a similar offence, will, I hope, induce her to forget the one I have so undesignedly given."

Surprised and piqued by a speech that implied a degree of resentment so much beyond what she thought him entitled to feel, Sidney made no reply; and the set being almost concluded, Major Sedley conducted her in silence to the first vacant seat. After a few trivial and cursory remarks on the company in general, he left her to pay his compliments to Mrs. Enesy, whom he said he had not seen since his arrival, apparently pleased at the opportunity it afforded him of breaking off the conversation.

The various emotions which assailed Sidney, on observing such a change in Major Sedley's

manners, she found it difficult either to repress or disguise; but justly offended pride rising to her assistance, and forcibly representing the ridicule to which a suspicion of her feelings must expose her, she was enabled in a few moments to quell her agitation; and, joining Anna, she forced herself to take part in the conversation in which she was engaged with her companions. With her she continued till summoned by Mr. Radcliffe, who had previously engaged her, again to join the dancers; and to this she felt well inclined, as she could with much greater ease disguise her uneasiness, while thus employed, than while obliged to support conversation in which she could feel no interest.

As Mr. Radcliffe shewed no disposition to leave her on the conclusion of the dance, and as she felt the effort of assumed gaiety, while her thoughts were in a state of such painful confusion, extremely irksome, she complained of fatigue as an excuse for her too obvious inattention, and proposed walking into one of the adjoining apartments. They were proceeding thither, when Mr. Radcliffe, stopping to

speak to a gentleman, Sidney, who was leaning on his arm, was obliged to do so also; and, accidentally looking round, perceived Major Sedley, who had thrown himself on one of the benches, buried in profound thought.

Captain Elmore at the same moment came out of the ball-room, near the door of which Major Sedley had stationed himself; and, struck by his attitude, and the paleness of his countenance, he laid his hand on his arm, exclaiming, "What is the matter, Otwage? —are you ill?"

Roused by this address from the deep reverie into which he had fallen, Major Sedley was beginning a reply; when, catching Sidney's eye, who had involuntarily watched him, he coloured violently; and, angrily throwing off Captain Elmore's hand, he rose from his seat.

Surprised by his manner, Captain Elmore said something in a voice too low for Sidney to hear; but Sedley, scarcely making any reply, proceeded into the ball-room; and, Mr. Radcliffe at the same time moving on, she could not observe whether Captain Elmore followed him.

She had been but a short time in the adjoining room, when Captain Elmore, approaching, asked her for the next set; and, though apprehensive he had some particular motive for so doing, her fears of betraying the least indication of her feelings withheld her from a refusal. Mr. Radcliffe then, consigning her to his care, joined Anna.

For some time after his departure Captain Elmore conversed on indifferent subjects; when, pausing for a few moments, he said, "I observed that Sedley danced with you to-night, Miss Montague; did he at that time appear ill, or out of spirits?"

This question confirmed all Sidney's fears; and she with difficulty replied, "I thought Major Sedley appeared ill on his first coming into the room; but, on my asking him if he was indisposed, he said not; and I therefore paid no farther attention to his looks."

"To a similar inquiry from me," cried Captain Elmore, "he made just the same reply, with an abruptness which I believe you must have observed; and that I

avow surprised me, as such a manner is not very usual to Sedley. How to account for such conduct I am much at a loss, as he refused to give me any explanation on the subject; and my motive for speaking to you was a wish to learn if you had observed any change in his manner, since his arrival, that might give me some clue to discover if any thing particular had occurred to him He returned so late to C——, that I had not a moment's conversation with him before we set out, and during our drive he talked wholly on some regimental business, which detained us for some time after Colonel Coote's departure. What therefore has happened, or why he has treated me so unaccountably, I cannot conjecture; but, when he recovers from a degree of ill-humour I never before saw him exhibit, I suppose he will inform me."

The vexation which Captain Elmore betrayed, convinced Sidney that he was wholly ignorant of what had taken place between Major Sedley and herself, and that he could not therefore have any other design in speaking to her on the subject than what he had avowed.

Pleased by the kindness he on every occasion manifested towards his friend, and grieved to perceive how much he felt hurt by Sedley's manner, she said she hoped nothing more than an accidental depression of spirits had affected the general serenity of Major Sedley's temper, as she was convinced he could not intentionally wound the feelings of a friend for whom he had such a warm regard, and one who so well deserved his attachment.

"I must hope so," said Captain Elmore, "for, had any thing serious occurred, Sedley would not, I think, have kept me in ignorance; and, as he is entitled to every forbearance, he shall meet it on the only occasion of his life in which he has ever put it to the trial."

Sidney could not, without astonishment, reflect on the extravagance of resentment to which Sedley had yielded himself a prey, when it could thus influence him to treat a friend he so deservedly loved in a manner which required all his good humour and affection to pass over in silence.

As Captain Elmore was attending Sidney to a seat, they happened to pass near where

Mrs. Enesy was conversing with Major Sedley, and, making room beside her, she asked Sidney to sit down, saying she had a request to make to her.

Sidney, though unwilling to take a seat near Sedley, who had appeared so desirous to avoid her, knew not how to object, and therefore sat down. Captain Elmore saying, that, since he had been robbed of his partner, he must go in search of another, turned away, without addressing a syllable to Major Sedley, who appeared uneasy and out of humour, though by no means so pale as he had been on his first entrance.

"I fear, my dear Sidney," cried Mrs. Enesy, "you will think me a great encroacher on your kindness, when I venture to make my petition. If, however, you find it either disagreeable or inconvenient, you must not stand on ceremony, but honestly say so."

"There is no petition you could make," replied Sidney, "I could find disagreeable; I cannot therefore hesitate to assure you of my ready compliance."

"You are very kind, indeed," said Mrs.

Enesy affectionately; "and I will no longer hesitate to ask you to exchange the cheerful scenes of Belle Vue, for a few days next week, for the more sober retirement of Mount Enesy. Mr. Enesy will leave home on Monday or Tuesday, and will not return for a fortnight, and, as he dislikes leaving me so long alone, he made me promise to ask the favour of your company to enliven my solitude."

As the present distressed state of Sidney's mind did not very well fit her for deriving much amusement from gay scenes, and as if Major Sedley wished to come to any explanation with her, when the present violence of his ill-founded and unreasonable feelings had subsided, he could as readily do so at Mount Enesy as at Belle Vue, she assured Mrs. Enesy, that, so far from considering it a sacrifice, she would accept her invitation with pleasure, and would attend her on any day she appointed.

Charmed by her ready acquiescence with a request she had considered it almost unreasonable to make, Mrs. Enesy thanked her with great warmth, repeatedly saying how happy

she esteemed herself in having acquired so amiable and obliging a friend.

Colonel Coote, now passing, stopped; and, after speaking to Mrs. Enesy for a few moments, said, with a smile, "Have you commenced a fashionable, Sedley, that you do not dance?"

"No, sir," cried Major Sedley, colouring, and appearing to be nettled by the inquiry, as he had sat in gloomy silence since Sidney's joining Mrs. Enesy; "I have no such intention."

"I only concluded so," said Colonel Coote, "from seeing you sit the whole evening, which I have never before observed you do."

"I feel extraordinarily fatigued by my ride from Mr. French's this morning," replied he, recovering his presence of mind.

"Or perhaps," exclaimed Miss Dalton, who had joined them in time to hear Colonel Coote's remarks, "you have at length taken pity on Dawson, and are now humbly content to resign the superiority of your pretensions in his favour."

"I have never disputed Mr. Dawson's claim to any species of merit," said Major Sedley, confounded by this remark; "and I cannot therefore withdraw any pretensions in his favour."

"I did not say you had disputed them," exclaimed Miss Dalton; "that I suppose you would have considered infinitely beneath you; but you completely dashed all the poor man's schemes, as he has himself had the honesty to confess; and that I presume you thought not only a very wise, but a very glorious, mode of proceeding."

"Your allusions," cried he, embarrassed, "are so far beyond my powers of comprehension, that I cannot pretend to reply to them."

"I thought you men of red," cried the indefatigable Miss Dalton, "left the pretty simpering affectation of ignorance to silly females. Now I recollect, that, on the very night to which I allude, Miss Montague affected equal ignorance of my meaning, which, though vastly pretty and becoming in her, does not at all suit a gallant soldier: they do not in general bear their blushing honours quite so meekly,

but triumph to the full as much in feats of love as they do in the feats of arms; nor would their laurels bloom with true martial lustre if not decked from the hot-bed of female folly, and fanned with the soft zephyr of female sighs."

"Your observations, madam," cried Colonel Coote, in utter amazement at her dauntless effrontery, "are not, I hope, the result of experience."

"Not at all, I assure you," cried she, disdainfully, "as I fancy Nature committed a small oversight in my composition, and gave me all head and no heart; for though I can spell and read pretty accurately, I never in my life knew what it was to feel; and therefore the pride, pomp, and circumstance of love and war, and of all their silly votaries, have been as totally unheeded by me as the humblest gnats in the creation."

Colonel Coote bowed, but made no reply; and a gentleman approaching, and asking Sidney to dance, she gladly made her escape from Miss Dalton, to whose remarks she had listened in an agony of terror, dreading that she

would become even more grossly pointed; and of this, by an involuntary glance, she perceived Major Sedley entertained a similar apprehension.

Anna, who was dancing with Captain Elmore, and standing next couple to Sidney, carelessly asked her if she had quarrelled with Major Sedley, or put him out of humour the first set, for he had never danced since, and appeared excessively out of sorts; "and when I rallied him on his gravity," continued she, "instead of laughing as usual, he seemed quite offended."

"How, my dear Anna, could you suppose that I could quarrel with Major Sedley?" cried Sidney, colouring at Anna's thoughtlessness, which came so near the truth: "He has, I suppose, met something more serious to disturb his tranquillity."

"I hope not," cried Anna. "Surely," continued she, addressing Captain Elmore, "your friend has not received any unpleasant intelligence."

"He has received none that I have heard of, I assure you," replied he, neither

willing nor able to gratify her curiosity: "he is perhaps fatigued, as he did not return to C—— till after we had dined; and in no other way can I account for his not dancing as usual."

On Sidney's again sitting down, she was joined by Miss Flowerdale and Mr. Elverton, who had never quitted her during the evening. As this marked singularity had attracted general observation, and Miss Dalton's among the rest, she had amused herself by following them, and uttering the most pointed sarcasms against both; and, on perceiving them stationary, she immediately joined them.

Eager to escape from her vulgarity, Sidney entered into conversation with the gentleman sitting next her; and, as he was a passionate lover of natural history, it soon turned on subjects connected with his favourite study. After a variety of interesting observations, he was beginning to remark the great difference that existed between the Irish and French spider, when Miss Flowerdale, who had not hitherto paid any attention to what he was saying, on catching the word spider, begged he would not have the barbarity

to mention such a horrid animal, as nothing she hated or dreaded more than the sight of that vile reptile.

The gentleman gravely assured her that her fears were superfluous, for, though the French spider was certainly a noxious insect, the Irish one was indisputably harmless; and he was proceeding to state some curious facts in support of his assertion, when Miss Flowerdale, interrupting him, said she could not endure to have so terrifying a subject discussed, and requested he would have the goodness to wave it for the present.

The gentleman, smiling at her absurdity, said, a lady's wishes he considered as commands.

"I am surprised, Elverton," exclaimed Miss Dalton, "that you would suffer a conversation so decidedly horrifying to a lady's nerves to proceed so far. I only waited to hear what you would say, or I should have issued my commands to the gentleman long since, to have forborne it. As Miss Flowerdale is so vastly delicate, so incomprehensibly timorous, I should recommend her a more

active protector; for I fancy you will find taking care of her and yourself infinitely more than your prowess is equal to."

"Miss Flowerdale, madam," cried Elverton, angrily, "will not, I should hope, be inclined to ask your advice on the subject, as she could not suppose it to proceed from very disinterested motives."

"Why?" cried Miss Dalton, bursting into a loud laugh; "does she apprehend that I have any wish to lay violent hands on her precious slave?"

"I should not suppose," cried he disdainfully, "that she bestows a thought on the subject. I should hope her attention is very differently engaged."

"You shew yourself a simpleton, then," said she; "the man about whom a woman does not consider worth feeling any jealousy, she seldom thinks of much consequence."

"Could I flatter myself with exciting such a sensation in Miss Flowerdale's gentle bosom," exclaimed Elverton, pertly, "it would be on some more worthy occasion."

"The object can never be more worthless

than the subject," cried the impenetrable Miss Dalton; "in that assurance you may rest satisfied."

Mr. Elverton, not choosing any farther altercation with a lady whom he found his sauciest tone could neither silence nor abash, was then rising to make his retreat, accompanied by Miss Flowerdale, when Miss Dalton, determined not to let them escape so quietly, called out, "I protest, Miss Flowerdale, there is a spider running up your gown, with legs as long as my arm. Take care, Elverton, it does not bite off your head."

On hearing these terrific words Miss Flowerdale uttered a piercing scream; and, darting forward, flew round the room, now nearly empty, from the numbers who had gone into the adjoining apartments.

"Follow her,—follow her, Elverton!" exclaimed Miss Dalton, laughing violently at her impetuous career: "A lady never flies but to be pursued."

This charge was unnecessary to Mr. Elverton, who had instantly followed her with a rapidity equal to her own; but, before he could

accomplish the task of catching the fair fugitive, Charles Montague, attracted by her screams, came hastily forward, and, meeting Miss Flowerdale flying towards the door, extended his arms, into which she sank with all the grace of a tragedy heroine, and was carried her to the next vacant seat.

Miss Flowerdale, thinking it necessary to swoon, reclined her head on young Montague's arm, and, closing her eyes, lay to all appearance in a state of insensibility, though the bright bloom of the rouge with which her cheeks were adorned cast a degree of ridicule on the performance that not one of the spectators whom curiosity had collected around her could wholly withstand. A general smile sat on the lips of every beholder, while some even laughed aloud; but Mr. Elverton, not thinking it his part to appear sensible of the deception, hung over her, calling loudly for assistance; and Charles, equally well inclined to carry on the farce, re-echoed his calls.

Miss Dalton, having officiously procured a glass of water, forced her way through the crowd to Miss Flowerdale, and, dipping her

hand in the water, deluged her face so profusely, that Miss Flowerdale quickly recollecting how much it must derange her rouge, and forgetting the part she intended to act, angrily pushed away her hand. Miss Dalton not being prepared for this sudden movement, or actuated by the desire of still farther tormenting her and her admirer, the glass and its contents were lodged in Mr. Elverton's bosom.

No sooner did Mr. Elverton feel the cold water pour in his breast, than, suddenly starting back, the glass fell to the ground; and Miss Flowerdale, whom he had taken from Charles, and was at the moment supporting, would have followed, had not Charles again caught her.

Miss Dalton, inexpressibly amused by the whole scene, now pulled her handkerchief from her ridicule, and, with as little ceremony as good nature, so roughly wiped away the water, as to daub the rouge in various spots over Miss Flowerdale's face, rendering her an object so strikingly ludicrous, that nothing could restrain the loud laughs of the spectators.

Miss Flowerdale, shocked and ashamed at the appearance she was conscious she must make, burst into tears; when Charles, feeling pity take place of mirth, on seeing her in real distress, concealed her face from farther observation till Sidney could force her way through the crowd to join him. Then, resigning her to her care, and saying he would go and fetch Mrs. Hervey, who was playing cards in an adjoining room, inattentive to the general bustle, he retired, inducing almost all those whom curiosity had collected around Miss Flowerdale to accompany him, and forcibly bringing off Miss Dalton, to whom he never considered the slightest ceremony due; and who, either from fear or inclination, paid an attention to his wishes she never shewed to those of any other person.

Sidney, addressing Miss Flowerdale with gentle kindness, entreated she would retire with her. With this request the mortified Miss Flowerdale complied, declining Mr. Elverton's attendance; who, with officious zeal, pressed his services. Feeling peculiar dislike

to be now exposed to his observation, she gladly left the room, accompanied by Sidney, and followed by Mrs. Hervey, whom Charles had, according to his promise, sent to console her.

Mr. Elverton, extremely apprehensive of cold, endeavoured to guard against it by requesting a servant to conduct him to a room where he might change his wet habiliments; and Kennedy, by his master's desire, supplied him with every article he required.

On reaching Sidney's room, Mrs. Hervey, for the first time, caught a full view of her niece's deranged countenance; when, equally angry and surprised, she repeatedly demanded how or by what means she had become thus disfigured, as she had understood from Mr. Montague that she had only been frightened.

Miss Flowerdale sobbed, but could make no reply; and Sidney then told Mrs. Hervey that Miss Dalton, fearing that Miss Flowerdale had fainted, had sprinkled some water in her face.

"And what should make you faint, Eliza?" cried Mrs. Hervey, angrily; "I don't see

any thing in the transaction that could so much alarm you. I think Miss Dalton very impertinent, and I shall tell her so without scruple. She is one of the most ill-behaved women I know; indeed I wonder she is received into good company."

This opinion Miss Flowerdale neither opposed nor supported; but, with a faint and peevish voice, requested Mrs. Hervey would order her carriage, and return home, as she felt herself very much indisposed.

"Ill or well," retorted Mrs. Hervey, "you must come home, as you are no fit figure to be seen; but I wish, Eliza, you would follow my advice, and lay aside your foolish conduct, in which Mr. Elverton takes so much pains to encourage you. All my friends to-night, from seeing him so constantly with you, have asked me if you are to be married to him. I told them of course not: could they suppose him a match for a girl of your fortune? So we must not have him so continually at our house in future; though he is a pleasant polite young man, he has no fortune; and therefore, my dear Miss Montague, I request you will

have the goodness to say I commissioned you to contradict this foolish report, as it might really injure Eliza; and I assure you there is not the least truth in it."

To this strange speech, and singular commission, Sidney replied by simply saying she would remember her injunctions; and Miss Flowerdale, in evident agitation, again, and angrily, requested Mrs. Hervey would order her carriage, without deigning to take the slightest notice of any part of her speech.

Sidney, at Mrs. Hervey's request, rang the bell and ordered her carriage, which was soon announced; when Mrs. Hervey, making bitter complaints of being obliged to leave her agreeable party before supper, proceeded down stairs, accompanied by Miss Flowerdale, leaning on Sidney's arm, with a long black veil thrown over her head, to conceal her face from the observation of any person she might meet on the way.

At the foot of the first flight of stairs they were met by Charles; and Sidney, consigning Miss Flowerdale to his care, returned to the ball-room, while he attended the fair discon-

solate to her carriage, pouring forth many polite expressions of concern at the indisposition that had deprived them of the pleasure of her company.

Mrs. Hervey, who felt an ardent desire that young Montague should propose for her niece, and had thus long appeared blind to Mr. Elverton's views from a wish of exciting Charles's jealousy, which his affected attention to Miss Flowerdale's whims, with the eagerness he had on many occasions manifested to tease Elverton, and her ignorance of his motives, induced her to consider no difficult task, felt some consolation for her disappointment and chagrin in the hope which his present attention gave her that he had at length come to the desired point.

Nothing, however, could be more remote from Charles's thoughts than the idea of such a connexion. Miss Flowerdale's whims amused him; and, as her affectation was not of that species that rendered her disagreeable he had, on every occasion, on which she either really or affectedly required his aid, been very ready to offer his services; but, to

make her his wife, no power could have compelled him; nor had either his father or mother ever thought of such a scheme. If he would only consent to marry a woman with a fortune adequate to their wishes, the lady, they considered, he had a very fair right to select for himself; and at his present very early years, they felt no other anxiety on the subject than to prevent him from forming a rash or imprudent connexion.

Very soon after Sidney's return to the ball-room the party were summoned to supper; as she had not been lately dancing, she had no partner to assist her through the crowd; and being immediately deserted by all her female companions, who were eager to secure the attendance of the respective gentlemen to whose attention they wished to lay claim, she was left entirely behind the remainder of the party.

Miss Dalton, whose attention had been so much occupied by a fierce debate she was carrying on with Mr. Dawson, respecting the merits of her carriage-horses, that she had not attended to the summons to supper till

reminded by Mr. Dawson, who was not equally inattentive, that if she did not make haste, she would get no good place, when, familiarly seizing hold of his arm, she declared he should assist her to bustle her way. Mr. Dawson, perfectly careless whom he incommoded, was moving hastily forward, when Miss Dalton, observing Sidney unattended, called out, "What the deuce, Miss Montague, has become of all your beaux? How comes it that you have neither a red nor a black knave to assist you in this serious dilemma of squeezing your way through the crowd?"

"I know not," said Sidney, forcing a laugh; "but so it has happened."

"If you had less heart and more face, I fancy," cried Miss Dalton, with involuntary kindness, "you would do better; but come, take my arm, and let us push on; or hold, here is Dawson will give you his; and he is a famous assistant in these kind of cases, however little he may be to your taste in any other instance."

"Miss Montague cannot want my assistance, I suppose," cried Mr. Dawson, in

surly voice, "or she would have taken more pains to secure it."

"I do not, indeed, sir," said Sidney, "either wish or require it."

"So much the better," muttered he, half aloud, "as you will not find me so officious as to offer it."

Miss Dalton, having reached the door, was compelled to stop, in despite of her utmost efforts to force forward, as, in waiting for Sidney to join her, she had suffered the whole party to collect there before her; when, looking round the room, she observed Major Sedley standing before one of the devices, apparently contemplating it with fixed attention, and called out, in a voice that almost made him start, "If your eyes have not completely swallowed up your ears, Major, I beg you will come here."

This call Major Sedley very reluctantly obeyed, as a wish to avoid Miss Dalton, or the being obliged to notice that Sidney was unattended, had alone induced him to stop before the device, to escape both.

The moment he came up Miss Dalton ex-

claimed, "What has become of your highly vaunted gallantry to-night, Major, that you suffer Miss Montague to remain unattended, though indispensably called on, as her partner, to pay her the compliment of assisting her to procure a place."

"Had I believed it possible," cried Major Sedley, in a tone of politeness, though evidently embarrassed, "that Miss Montague could have been unattended, I should not have been so remiss; but, as such a circumstance has never before occurred, it will, I hope, plead my apology for such inattention."

"Will that pass with you, my dear?" cried Miss Dalton, addressing Sidney: "Does such an apology entitle the Major to the honour of taking care of you?"

"I am sorry," said Sidney, in great confusion, "that you seem inclined to deprive me of the pleasure of being one of your party, but, if not very disagreeable to you, I will, if you please, continue under your friendly and voluntarily offered care."

"With pleasure, my dear, if it suits your convenience," cried Miss Dalton; "but have

my predictions been already verified?" continued she, glancing her eyes towards Major Sedley: "has the blazing meteor of grace and elegance carried its short-lived attractions to some new region, there to shine with equal splendour, and dazzling but transitory lustre, calculated to mislead, and determined to deceive?"

Sidney's agitation at this flighty, though cruelly meaning speech, was too great to allow her to make an effort to reply, even had she thought it prudent to attempt it; but, knowing Miss Dalton would not be restrained a moment from even more pointedly stating her opinion, if she affected to misunderstand her meaning, she continued silent, equally from choice and necessity. Major Sedley disdaining to speak, though the high colour that instantly overspread his cheeks proclaimed how well he understood her allusions, she waited for some moments in vain expectation of reply, when, finding that she was not likely to receive any, she turned to Mr. Dawson, and said, "Come, Dawson, now is the time for your less gaudy, but more useful qualities to shine forth;

so pray, sir, throw aside that sulky look, and freely follow the bent of your inclinations."

"My only inclination at present," cried he, "is to get my supper, which the volubility of your tongue seems to make you forget that we require."

"Well," cried she, "but, when that most serious of all wants is supplied, your next inclination will be for a pretty, gentle wife, and such a one you had long since sufficient sagacity to discover you would meet in Miss Montague."

"Oh, Miss Dalton, in pity forbear this cruel, indelicate conversation," said Sidney, in violent agitation.

Mr. Newton, an elderly gentleman, standing near, and who had listened to Miss Dalton in silent wonder, felt his compassion so powerfully excited by a view of Sidney's distress and confusion, that he could no longer remain an unconcerned spectator, and said, with good humour, "As I profess myself a disciple of Lavater, I may, without a fear of ridicule, venture to pronounce, from Miss Montague's countenance, that she will not find the feelings

of many hearts beat in unison with her own; and that, till she fortunately discovers a kindred mind, she will be as cautious of fettering her freedom, as she has ever been of giving hopes that she did not intend to realize."

Something between a sigh and a half-suppressed exclamation struck Sidney's ear as Mr. Newton concluded these words; but from whence it proceeded her agitation prevented her from discovering; and Miss Dalton, without appearing to have heard it, exclaimed, "And pray, my good Mr. Physiognomist, may I venture to ask how much heart does your wisdom ascribe to me, as I have always considered myself devoid of any?"

"Just enough," cried he, with great severity, "to feel and betray your sorrow for misapplied talents, and defeated expectations of happiness that you took no proper means to secure."

To sneers, to sarcasms, and to every species of rebuff, Miss Dalton listened with indifference, or rather with pleasure, as they merely excited her own talents for similar weapons of defence. But, struck to the heart by the truth of an observation which she did

not believe any human being had sufficient cleverness to make, and one of all others most galling to her pride, she could not rally her spirits sufficiently to attempt any reply, and merely urged Mr. Dawson to quicken his pace.

To do this Mr. Dawson required no entreaty, as he was considerably annoyed at the prospect of having every good place occupied before he could reach the supper-table; and though he could not refrain from expressing his pleasure, even to Miss Dalton herself, that some person had at length discovered the happy knack of silencing her, he obeyed her wishes by pushing forward with a degree of rudeness that soon forced a passage. Sidney, unable and unwilling to follow his example, was obliged to let go Miss Dalton's arm, who did not appear inclined to have her any longer for a companion, though not choosing to tell her so.

On perceiving that Miss Dalton did not think proper to wait for Sidney, Mr. Newton offered her his arm; and, under his protection, which she accepted with grateful pleasure, she was soon accommodated with a seat; but she

saw no more of Major Sedley, and could not discover whether or not he was in the room.

When supper was over, many of the party retired to the ball-room, and continued to dance with great spirit till near five o'clock; but neither Major Sedley nor Captain Elmore were of the number, though when or how they had departed no person seemed to know, or to think of remarking; and Sidney did not venture to make a single inquiry, not even of Anna.

When the general breaking up of the party permitted Sidney to retire to her room, and indulge her reflections without dread of observation, she reviewed Sedley's conduct during the whole of the evening with a degree of minuteness and precision that she could not before attempt. The more she reflected on the whole of his behaviour, the more singular and designedly offensive it appeared, as nothing she either had or could have said, when in such violent agitation, could authorize the resentment he indulged; and so far from wishing to accept the apology which she had felt herself called on to offer, or to seek any explanation of the feel-

ings that had prompted her refusal to reply to his inquiries, he had expressly told her that he considered no apology due to him, and never hereafter meant to take the slightest interest in her affairs ; for such, on consideration, his reply had explicitly avowed to be his intention, and his conduct during the evening had too fully indicated that such was indisputably his determination.

How to reconcile such extreme injustice, such unprovoked and unreasonable resentment, with the whole tenour of what his conduct and character had ever before appeared, she knew not, and would have supposed that he had merely assumed feelings and principles inconsistent with his real disposition, had not the reflection of how impossible it was that he could have carried on such a deception without being betrayed by some of his brother officers, even had Captain Elmore been ever so well inclined to assist him, forbad her to indulge such a belief. The only supposition she could with any semblance of probability rest on was, that Fanny had, by some inexplicable means, worked up his passions to

their present state of incomprehensible irritation; and that, considering himself bound in honour not to betray her, he had angrily repelled Captain Elmore's attention, in order to escape his inquiries.

Wild and improbable as this conjecture appeared, the more she reflected on the little power which Fanny had, without having recourse to the basest falsehood, to injure her, she could substitute no other in its room; and, as Fanny had taken such malicious pains to destroy her uncle's affection for her, it appeared the less unjust to suspect her of similar duplicity and malevolence in the present case.

The supposition of Fanny's acting this unjustifiable part, though it in some degree lessened her surprise at Sedley's conduct, did not lessen her resentment. The man who could blindly surrender his judgment and his feelings to the guidance of a woman whom he had appeared to view with contempt, and who had so vainly endeavoured to attract his attention, though she was placed in a situation which might have induced him to overlook many deficiencies, could no longer merit that degree

of confidence or esteem which she thought indispensably necessary to render the married state happy. She therefore prudently resolved, that, unless Sedley offered an ample justification of his late behaviour, no degree of tenderness, inspired by the excellence of his disposition, his acknowledged talents, or the affection he had on so many occasions evinced, should so far blind her judgment, as to induce her to trust her happiness to the power of a man whom she must now consider as very deficient either in temper or in understanding.

CHAP. XX.

DURING the course of the ensuing day Sidney saw neither Major Sedley nor Captain Elmore; for, though both left their cards at Belle-Vue, they did not ask admittance. In despite of wounded affection and insulted pride, she could not conquer the most restless anxiety for the further developement of what appeared so mysterious and extraordinary, and she sighed with even feverish impatience for an opportunity of being enabled to form some more satisfactory opinion.

Fanny's conduct to herself she watched with a jealous and very unusual attention, but could gather little that was satisfactory from her observations. Towards her she was more rude than ever, but no other particularity marked her behaviour; and she spoke of Sedley with the same spleen which she had long been accustomed to indulge against

him; remarking his illbreeding in not having asked her to dance during the evening; but in no other way appearing to have taken any notice of his conduct.

Sidney, more puzzled than ever, knew not what to think; but, dreading that Anna's levity might induce her to hazard means of gratifying her curiosity that she would herself shrink from, she forbore from speaking to her on the subject; while Anna, who concluded that Major Sedley must have received some intelligence that put him out of humour, and which neither he nor Captain Elmore chose to avow, thought not of nor inquired into her feelings or opinions, perfectly unconscious of his change of manners to Sidney, or that she had been in any way accessary to the derangement of his serenity, or the dejection of his spirits.

In the midst of her mortification, resentment, and impatience, Sidney experienced some comfort from observing that Mrs. Montague treated her with more of the kindness she had shewn her on the first few days of their acquaintance than she had done since that

period. For this change she could only account by supposing it originated in pleasure at finding the heart of her son perfectly disengaged; and, though this idea in a trifling degree hurt her pride, it also gratified her, as it proved that Mrs. Montague, when left to the guidance of her own feelings, would never, in the slightest degree, have imbittered her residence under her uncle's roof; indeed her aunt's habitual gentleness of temper and disposition, rendered her a most pleasing and agreeable mistress of a family. To Charles, however, though he had concealed it, she was wholly indebted for the change in Mrs. Montague's sentiments and manner. On leaving his father on the morning when an avowal of his feelings with respect to Sidney, had been so expressly demanded, he thought himself equally called on to satisfy his mother's mind; and this he was the more anxious to do, as she had never directly or indirectly, questioned him on the subject. Having therefore requested to speak to her in private, with unaffected tenderness he entreated that she

would banish from her mind every uneasy apprehension of his entertaining any other sentiments towards his cousin than her amiable disposition and near relationship demanded; assuring her, on his solemn honour, that he did not: if he did, he added, a little proudly, he should disdain to conceal it a moment.

Delighted at a declaration, the truth of which her knowledge of his character left her no room to doubt, and enchanted by the affectionate attention that had prompted this voluntary avowal, Mrs. Montague, with tears of gratitude embraced and thanked her son, declaring, that he was most justly the pride and delight of her life.

Her caresses Charles returned with equal tenderness; and then seized the favourable opportunity to request, that as she was now convinced that, neither Sidney nor himself had a thought or wish that could disturb her peace, she would, to gratify and oblige him, treat her with that affection which he knew she would, if unprejudiced, feel for her.

Fanny's name Charles purposely forbore to mention, from delicacy to his mother; and

Mrs. Montague, though conscious to whom he alluded, without taking any notice of the insinuation, readily promised that her future conduct to Sidney should be such as would satisfy him. Charles, perfectly contented, entered no farther on the subject.

To fulfil her promise Mrs. Montague did not find quite so easy, as, in the first moment of grateful affection to Charles, she had believed she should. From her earliest infancy, she had studied every wish and every whim of Fanny's, and had induced her husband to do the same, thought he had never felt that peculiar affection for her that she had, and she now knew not how to oppose her, even in the merest trifles: yet, her tenderness for Fanny, great as it was, fell infinitely short of that which she felt for Charles; Fanny's selfishness and caprices had sometimes rendered her disagreeable even to her mother; but his affectionate attention, and constant gaiety and good humour, formed, as she had declared, the principal happiness of her life.

To act a neutral part between the contending parties she judged her best plan; and,

while from inclination and habit she would as usual study all Fanny's wishes, she determined to gratify her son in so reasonable a request as to treat Sidney with the kindness she deserved; and, in this instance at least, no longer to indulge Fanny's prejudices. Yet, her violent discontent, on perceiving this change in her mother's sentiments, so harassed and tormented Mrs. Montague, that she was induced to behave with a degree of reserve to Sidney that she would not otherwise have practised. Of this Sidney was unconscious, from never having been accustomed to meet her kindness; and Charles, satisfied with a degree of attention as great as he knew his mother, without quarrelling with Fanny, could pay to Sidney, made no farther remark or allusion to the subject, and shewed his gratitude by suffering Fanny to escape free from the sarcasms which he had latterly indulged himself in uttering against her. Fanny, finding that she must temporize, or drive matters to extremities, which she might not have found very pleasant, at length yielded to circumstances, and treated Sidney

with silent contempt; while Miss Watkins, astonished at the change she now witnessed, felt obliged, however reluctantly, to follow her example.

A large party had been invited to dine at Belle Vue on the ensuing Saturday after the ball; and to Major Sedley and Captain Elmore cards had been sent, along with all the other military gentlemen. Sidney anxiously looked forward to the result of the meeting, as neither Major Sedley nor Captain Elmore had come to Belle Vue since the morning after the ball; Charles declaring, without seeming to have any doubt of the fact, that they had both been so particularly engaged on business that they could not leave C—— for the last two days.

The period so ardently desired by Sidney at length arrived, and she descended to the drawing-room at the usual hour, feeling a strong degree of agitation and resentment mingle with an impatience and anxiety which she found it impossible to conquer.

She had not been long in the room when Mrs. Hervey, Miss Flowerdale, and some

others of the expected guests, made their appearance. Mrs. Hervey, almost instantly addressing her, asked if she had remembered her promise.

Sidney blushed at the question, as she could not at the moment recollect what promise she had given her; but, on Mrs. Hervey's reminding her that she had promised to contradict the report of Miss Flowerdale's being on the eve of marriage with Mr. Elverton, she recovered from her confusion, and said she had undeceived her aunt and uncle, but no others, as an opportunity had not yet offered.

"Thank you, my dear Miss Montague," exclaimed Mrs. Hervey; "you have inexpressibly obliged me, as your aunt and uncle were the people of all others I most particularly wished to learn the falsehood of that report."

Sidney, neither wondering nor caring why, made no inquiry; and Mrs. Hervey, then leaving her, went to where Mrs. Montague was sitting, to whom she paid a profusion of silly compliments that not a little surprised her, from being ignorant of her wishes and her views.

Amongst the last of those who made their appearance were Major Sedley and Captain Elmore. When they had paid their compliments in a general manner, both gentlemen carelessly advanced towards Sidney, and, after conversing with her for a few moments on indifferent subjects, they quitted her before she could in any degree recover from the astonishment which the unusual behaviour of each excited. In Major Sedley's countenance or manner, no trace of resentment was visible: he was perfectly calm and collected, though a tincture of haughty reserve was perceptible in his deportment. His colour had slightly changed as he had first accosted her, but in no other way did he indicate the smallest emotion. Captain Elmore was scrupulously polite, pointedly marked in his attention and inquiries; but all his former cordiality, and frank freedom of manner, were gone. He addressed himself as if to a total stranger, but as to a stranger he felt it incumbent on him to treat with a peculiar ceremoniousness of politeness.

When Sidney could so far recover from

the shock this unlooked-for change, not only in Major Sedley, but in Captain Elmore, had given her, the first feeling that came to her assistance was pride; and, determining to shew how little impression their joint efforts could avail to throw her off her guard, with haughty, though sedate coolness of look and manner, she turned to address Miss Radcliffe, who was sitting next her, and continued to converse with her till summoned to dinner.

Early in the evening Mr. French, Mr. Elverton, and several other young men, came into the drawing-room together; and Miss Radcliffe begged of Sidney to observe the alteration in Miss Flowerdale's manner to Mr. Elverton.

Sidney's attention thus forcibly fixed on an object that had before wholly escaped her thoughts, with some surprise she perceived, that, in place of the soft and languishing encouragement which Miss Flowerdale had hitherto given to Mr. Elverton, she now purposely avoided him, while Mr. Elverton, with admirable effect, folded his arms across his breast, and displayed all the airs of a for-

saken and love-sick swain, to the infinite entertainment of all those who observed him.

Miss Flowerdale, secretly flattered by his apparent despair, and eager still farther to mortify him, devoted her whole attention to Charles Montague. Ignorant of her motives, but as anxious to annoy Elverton as she could be, Charles promptly seconded her wishes, never quitting her for an instant, and pouring forth a profusion of the most flattering and high-sounding compliments which his ready fancy could suggest.

The observation of this scene excited a momentary degree of astonishment in Sidney, but it could not long engage her attention, though she gladly seized on it as a convenient pretext for silence; affecting to be too much entertained by it to engage in conversation with Miss Radcliffe, who, on perceiving her absence, soon left her.

Not with her indifference did Mrs. Hervey survey her niece's conduct: her delight was so extravagant, at thinking her hopes and schemes would now be realized, that scarcely could she forbear, in the joy of her heart, expressing her

satisfaction to Mrs. Montague, who, had she had the slightest glimpse of her views, could not have failed to penetrate her manner; but, perfectly ignorant on the subject, she imputed her strange hints merely to anxiety to convince every person present, that her niece had no intention of throwing herself away on a subaltern officer; and well acquainted with the weakness of Mrs. Hervey's understanding, she experienced very little surprise.

Miss Flowerdale's present conduct was partly guided by a natural love of coquetry, and partly by the impression which her aunt's representations had made of the probability that young Montague would propose for her, if she gave him sufficient encouragement, and totally repulsed Elverton. Equally influenced by both motives, she determined to make the trial; and as Mr. Elverton had rather found access to her vanity than to her heart, of which she possessed little, she, with perfect, *sang froid* determined, that, if young Montague was really the slave of her charms, she would accept him: he was to the full as handsome as Mr. Elverton, much younger,

and possessed a fine fortune of which the other could not boast; in addition to which, he had raised himself in her favour by his conduct on the night of the ball; and though Mr. Elverton had offered the grossest adulation to her vanity, he had never yet touched one stronger feeling.

From the reverie into which Sidney had unconsciously fallen, on being left by Miss Radcliffe, she was roused by Mr. French, who, taking a seat beside her, expressed a hope that she was not ill; as she appeared so much out of spirits.

Recalled to herself by this remark, and peculiarly dreading Mr. French's observations, Sidney compelled herself not only to enter into conversation with him, but even to assume gaiety. Mr. French, struck by an inconsistency in her manners, and a sort of levity into which her anxiety to appear in spirits betrayed her, such as he had never before observed, by degrees laid aside the reserve she had formerly obliged him to assume, and talked to her in a strain of gallantry and compliment which he had never before ventured; while Sidney, in-

attentive to all but her own feelings, laughed and chatted without perfectly comprehending the meaning of what she uttered.

As they were thus engaged, Major Sedley and Captain Elmore entered the room together. Major Sedley involuntarily glancing his eyes towards Sidney, on perceiving her animation, and with whom she was conversing, his countenance assumed an expression of almost petrifying anger and disdain ; but, suddenly withdrawing his observation, he accompanied Captain Elmore to the piano-forte, at which Fanny was seated, and, leaning over the back of a chair, appeared totally absorbed in attention to her playing.

Sidney felt shocked at the glance Sedley had given her, and even Mr. French paused for an instant, as he had also observed it ; but a moment's recollection sufficing to convince her that the man who had treated her as he had apparently done ought not to have any influence over her conduct, and the dread of Mr. French's observations returning with redoubled force, from perceiving the attention with which he watched her, her mind was too

much perturbed to distinguish the just boundary between levity and a proper display of indifference, and she again resumed her former fictitious gaiety, though her heart throbbed with such violence as nearly impeded all her efforts at conversation.

In about half an hour after Major Sedley's entrance, Fanny, declaring herself quite fatigued, declined to play any longer. Mr. Montague, who was extremely partial to Sidney's sweet and plaintive manner of singing, then requested she would oblige him with his favorite song of "*The Meeting of the Waters.*"

With this request Sidney rose to comply, though very unwilling to approach the place at which Sedley had stationed himself; but, hoping he would retire on seeing her advance, she proceeded, and took her place with tolerable firmness, Mr. French following, and placing himself at the back of her chair.

On seeing her approach, Major Sedley, as she had expected, instantly turned away; but Fanny asking him to look over some music, about which they had been speaking, he complied, and, standing at the piano-forte, turned

over the leaves of the books which Fanny presented to him, replying to the different remarks she made on each in a voice too low to disturb Sidney, but without seeming to pay her the slightest attention.

Sidney, observing his conduct, and merely anxious to avoid his observation, endeavoured to comply with Mr. Montague's request, and, though with very little of her customary grace, got through the song: she was then rising to leave the piano-forte, when Mr. French, whose attention had not been so much occupied by his conversation with her as to preclude him from watching, and secretly enjoying, Elverton's mortification and studied display of his feelings, earnestly entreated that she would oblige him with the song of, "*Roy's Wife of Aldovaloch,*" the most appropriate one which at the moment occurred to him for Elverton's present situation. Sidney, perfectly unconscious of his motives for making such a request, which the agitation of her own mind prevented from once occurring to her, and induced by his urgency and entreaties, at length complied:

On hearing the commencement of the song, Major Sedley suddenly ceased speaking to Fanny, and for some moments his colour varied with extreme rapidity from marble whiteness to a crimson glow; when, at length, catching Sidney's eye, he smiled with an expression of such disdain, that Sidney, unable any longer to repress the feelings that so powerfully assailed her, after a few faint efforts to strike the notes, sank back in her chair, and the violence of her emotions, denied the relief of tears, deprived her of sense and motion.

Mr. French, astonished and confounded, though he had not observed Major Sedley's look, as he was watching Mr. Elverton, caught her in his arms, and prevented her falling to the ground. Charles, roused by the general confusion, hastily darted forward to her assistance, and, lifting her in his arms, carried her into the hall for fresh air. The moment she began to recover her recollection, he tenderly inquired what had occurred to occasion her illness.

"Nothing in the world," cried Sidney, perceiving Captain Elmore, Mr. French, and several others, standing near; "I have not

been quite well all day, and the noise and heat of the room overpowered me."

"Perhaps you would like to retire to your room," said Charles: "if you do, Anna will go with you; lean on my arm, and I will assist you."

"Do, my dear," said Mrs. Montague, with much kindness: "you have not appeared at all well to day; I fancy you have caught cold; I will therefore order Rice to prepare whatever she thinks will be of service to you; you know she is an excellent nurse."

Sidney thanked her aunt, and, taking Charles's offered arm, accompanied by Anna, she went up stairs.

On reaching her chamber, Charles stopped, and said, in a hasty whisper, "Is any thing the matter with you, Sidney, but mere indisposition? Has any thing occurred to wound your feelings? Say yes or no; but nothing more."

"No," cried Sidney, steadily: struck with terror lest he had observed Sedley's conduct, and would perhaps call him to an account, if he found that she resented it.

"Good-night, then, I am perfectly satified," cried Charles, "and will now send Rice with her potations."

He ran quickly away; and Sidney, still more convinced she was right, by observing the pleasure he seemed to feel in thinking she was only ill, blessed the presence of mind that prevented her giving way to feelings that might have produced such a catastrophe; as, let her waver in what other opinion she had formed of Sedley, his spirit she could not doubt; and of Charles's violence, when his pride was roused, she had the best-grounded terror.

The moment he was gone, however, every other sensation yielded to the bitter feelings of wounded and deeply-irritated pride; and, unrestrained by Anna's presence, and incapable of longer controlling her emotions, she threw herself into a chair, and burst into a torrent of tears.

Anna, however surprised, forbore any remark till she had procured her some hartshorn and water, and in some degree soothed and revived her by attention and kindness. She then declared her observation of a

very striking change in Major Sedley's manners during the whole day, entreating she would give her some satisfactory account of what had occurred so much to agitate her, as it was vain to endeavour to impose on her by saying it was mere illness by which she had been thus violently affected.

Glad to relieve the feelings that had thus long oppressed her, and thinking any farther disguise impossible, Sidney related every circumstance that had taken place between her and Sedley, and thus, as far as she could, accounted for the change in his conduct towards her.

Anna listened with eager attention, and, the moment she had concluded her recital, burst forth into vehement abuse of Sedley, declaring he had wantonly trifled with her, and that she would instantly mention his conduct to Charles, as it was impossible to say that he had not studiously sought to recommend himself to her favour, and had drawn back the moment he felt he had gone farther than mere friendship warranted.

Alarmed by her threat of complaining to

Charles, Sidney strongly represented the folly of such conduct, and urged, how inevitably it would produce a quarrel between him and Major Sedley. It would also expose her to the derision of the world, which might perhaps say that she had wantonly exposed herself to insult by engaging her affections to a man who had not made any direct avowal of his own sentiments.

Convinced by her arguments, Anna consented to remain silent, and to take no notice, even to Sedley himself, of her having observed any change in his conduct. As the first effervescence of her passions subsided, the pride, inherent in her family rose, and she declared that no man, capable of acting so base a part, deserved a moment's thought; that she should feel pleasure in taking pains to convince him she had never considered his conduct as deserving of serious regard; and that she viewed it as of a similar stamp with that practised by so many others of his profession, which had deservedly exposed them to the stigma universally attached to them. She strenuously urged

Sidney to act the same part, saying, that even if she considered her brother's life of no value, she should think him wrong in gratifying Sedley, by making him seem of so much consequence, and thus perhaps adding all that was yet wanting to the full completion of his vanity. As he had proved that he had sufficient spirit to fight in any cause, the world might consider that as an ample atonement for any baseness he could practise.

In this point of view Sedley's conduct had never before struck Sidney; but, thus represented by Anna, it seemed as if she had at length discovered the true source of what had so much surprised her; and the anger Sedley had at first displayed, she now considered as finesse, and with mingled horror and astonishment reflected on such deep and complicated baseness. That such conduct was every day practised she had no room to doubt; yet these men, who, if guilty of similar fraud and perfidy, in any other transaction of life, would be branded with deserved dishonour, were well received in the world, she also knew; and, however reluctant to believe that any

human being could so well have assumed feelings they were so far from possessing, she could no longer doubt it was the case; and accounted for her having been so grossly deceived by concluding from Captain Elmore's conduct, and the general regard in which Sedley seemed held by his regiment, that such a mode of behaviour was not in general stigmatized by military men. She therefore determined to follow Anna's advice, of convincing Major Sedley and all his brother-officers that his conduct had made no more impression on her mind than it had on theirs; and, after strengthening Anna in her resolution of shewing no outward disapprobation to Sedley, and warmly thanking her for her present kindness and promised support, to enable her to act with firmness, she requested to be left alone.

With this request Anna complied, and, affectionately embracing her, retired. Feeling relieved by having at length given utterance to the emotions she had so long and so painfully suppressed, pride helped to calm the tumult

of her mind, and inspired her with fortitude to meet and repel, with dignified composure, an insult which could only be treated properly when received with cool contempt.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Printed by W. CLOWES, Northumberland-court, Strand, London.

P99

